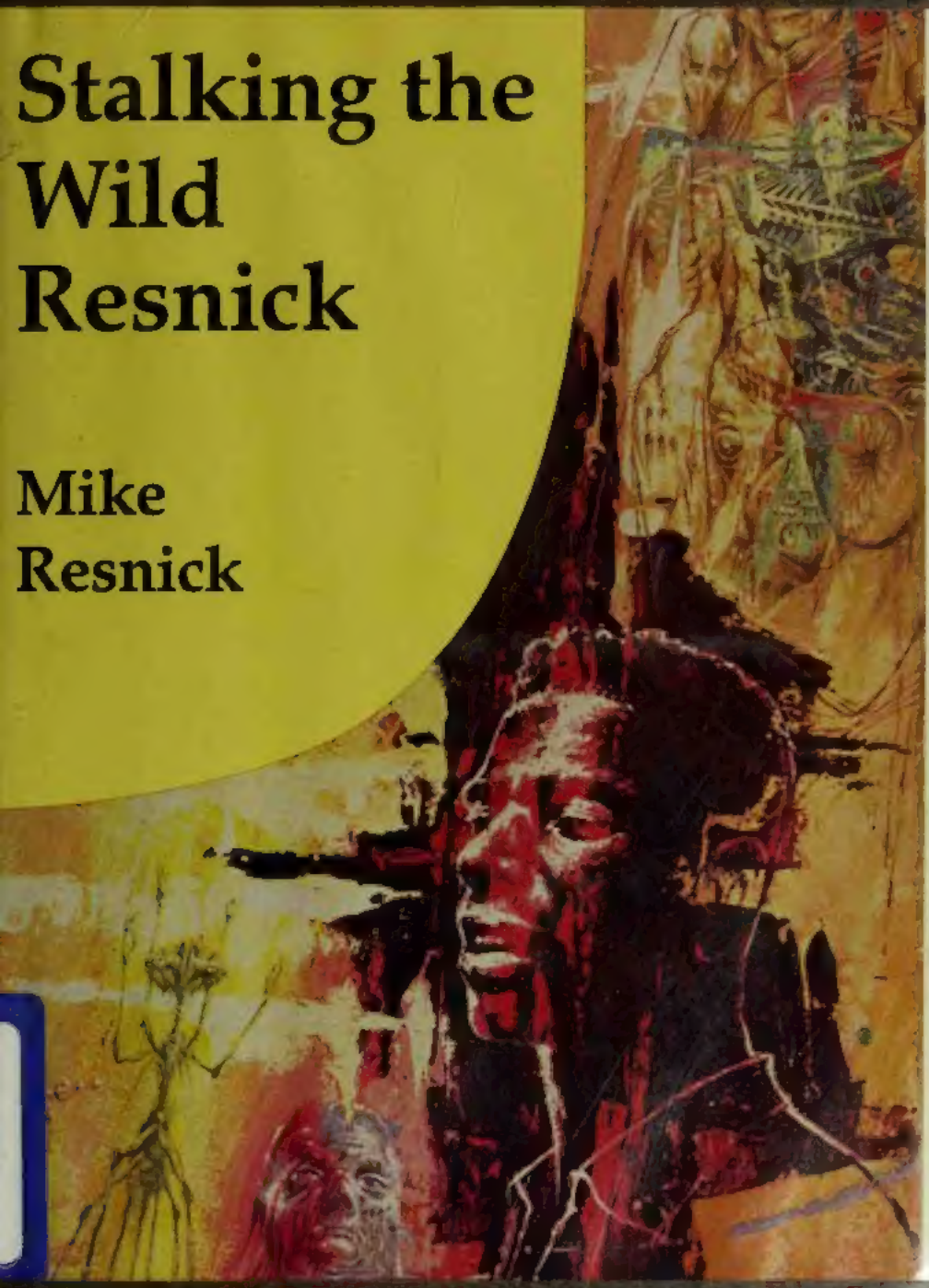
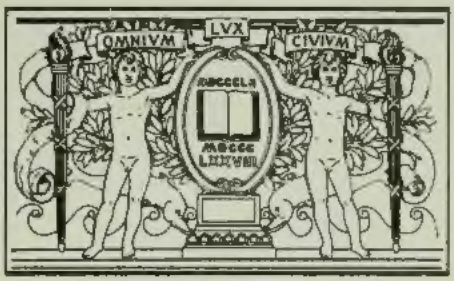
# Stalking the Wild Resnick

Mike Resnick



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# STALKING THE WILD RESNICK

## Mike Resnick

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To Carol, as always

And to Rick Katze and Tony Lewis,
mighty hunters and fearsome warriors
in the swamps and jungles of NESFA

# Introduction

In his book, *Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton,* Edward Rice begins his excellent biography with the following:

> "If a Victorian novelist of the most romantic type had invented Capt. Sir Richard Francis Burton, the character might have been dismissed by both public and critics in that rational age as too extreme, too unlikely."

Even by our jaded standards of today Burton was larger than life, world traveler and explorer of the "Dark Continent" (as well as a critic of Europe's misrule of it), master of travel literature, translator of the fabulous *Arabian Nights,* and the first westerner to unlock the secrets of the *Kama Sutra.* When it comes right down to it, Burton was in a class by himself...until along came Mike Resnick.

Unfortunately, no super-qualified biographer like Edward Rice has taken on the equally fascinating subject of Mike Resnick, thus making my job a much more difficult one. Rice also had it easy.

Countless articles, encyclopedia references, etc., had already given him the basics to work for with his biography of Burton, and Burton was larger than life...but when you get right down to it he wasn't that much different from Mike Resnick.

Sure, Burton explored deepest darkest Africa, recording his observations in such books as *First Footsteps in East Africa* and *Two Trips to Gorilla Land.* Mike, too, has braved the dark continent on four separate occasions, immortalizing his experience in his vacation notes series, featured in *Lan's Lantern.* Burton only had to face the dangers of the wilderness, while Mike overcame even greater obstacles: nonrefundable airline fares with dangerously close New York to London to Nairobi connections, repetitious in-flight films, overstocked all-you-can-eat buffets, native card sharks, jet lag, and playing musical rooms in the Heathrow Holiday Inn. Mike Resnick — brave white hunter.

Sure, audiences of the West owe Burton a tremendous debt for translating the fabulous *Arabian Nights,* offering a thousand and one tales of adventure from which such legendary heroes as Sinbad and Aladdin have been drawn...but Mike has beaten him on this score, too. True, he has yet to pass the thousand-title mark, but, unlike Burton, Mike is the creator of his fictions and not a mere translator. He has given his readers such immortal "heroes" as Lucifer Jones, Flint the carny man, the Leather Madonna, and, of course, Santiago. No mere second-hand fabulist, but a creative and wonderfully inventive author, whether he is mining the myths and legends of the past, or postulating possibilities of our infinite future. Mike Resnick — storyteller extraordinaire.

Ah, you say, but what about Burton's translation of the *Kama Sutra,* that mystical guide to sexual performance and fulfillment? Where would we and the porno..., I mean, pleasure industry be without the seminal guide to doing it by the numbers. Well, once again, Mike has him beat, having provided the American public (at

least those who frequent bus stations) with numerous volumes (roughly one every 72 hours) of instructional fantasies for dysfunctional couples, and always the humble humanitarian with no thought for fame or acclaim, written anonymously. Mick Resnick — the layman's Masters and Johnson.

Thus, by comparing Mike Resnick to such second-raters as Captain Sir Richard Burton, one is easily impressed by his great many accomplishments...yet there is even more.

He is a loving husband to Carol, his beautiful wife of thirty years, and the devoted father of Laura.

More than just a family man, he is equally kind to animals and operates the largest boarding kennel in the U.S.

He was a Hugo award winner for his short story "Kirinyaga," and the only man ever to survive a collaboration with both Jack Chalker and George Alec Effinger at the same time (a novel called *The Red Tape War*).

He has been a toastmaster at a Worldcon, an erudite panelist, and an aficionado of Theodore Roosevelt.

So when it comes right down to it, Mike Resnick beats out Richard Burton as a biographical subject any day. True, he has never married Elizabeth Taylor, but neither had the good captain. ...Besides, who needs Elizabeth Taylor when he already has Carol (sorry, Liz, you were just too late).

— Brian Thomsen

## Science Fiction Books by Mike Resnick

The Goddess of Ganymede
Pursuit on Ganymede
Redbeard
Battlestar Galactica #5: Galactica Discovers Earth
The Soul Eater
Birthright: The Book of Man
Walpurgis III
Sideshow
The Three-Legged Hootch Dancer
The Wild Alien Tamer
The Best Rootin' Tootin' Shootin' Gunslinger in the Whole Damned Galaxy
Unauthorized Autobiographies
The Branch
Eros Ascending
Eros at Zenith
Eros Descending
Eros at Nadir
Adventures
Santiago: A Myth of the Far Future
Stalking the Unicorn: A Fable of Tonight
The Dark Lady: A Romance of the Far Future
Ivory: A Legend of Past and Future
Paradise: A Chronicle of a Distant World
Second Contact
Through Darkest Resnick with Gun and Camera
Bwana
Bully!
The Red Tape War (with Jack L. Chalker and George Alec Effinger)
Soothsayer
Oracle
Prophet
The Alien Heart
Pink Elephants and Hairy Toads

(as editor):
Shaggy B.E.M. Stories
The Alternate Presidents (with Martin H. Greenberg)

# Stalking the Wild Resnick

*Nothing I've ever written has had the impact of the Kirinyaga stories. The fans like them — the first two were nominated for the Hugo, and "Kirinyaga" won it; the writers like them — the first two were also nominated for the Nebula; and the critics seem totally befuddled by them, although I consider them simple, straightforward stories. Or maybe they're not quite that simple. Try this one and make up your own mind.*

# The Manamouki

MANY EONS AGO, THE children of Gikuyu, who was himself the first Kikuyu, lived on the slopes of the holy mountain Kirinyaga, which men now call Mount Kenya.

There were many serpents on the mountain, but the sons and grandsons of Gikuyu found them repulsive, and they soon killed all but one.

Then one day the last serpent entered their village and killed and ate a young child. The children of Gikuyu sought out their *mundumugu* — their witch doctor — and asked him to destroy the menace.

The *mundumugu* rolled the bones and sacrificed a goat, and finally he created a poison that would kill the serpent. He slit open the belly of another goat, and placed the poison inside it, and left it beneath a tree, and the very next day the serpent swallowed the goat and died.

"Now," said the *mundumugu,* "you must cut the serpent into one

hundred pieces and scatter them on the holy mountain, so that no demon can breathe life back into its body."

The children of Gikuyu did as they were instructed, and scattered the hundred pieces of the serpent across the slopes of Kirinyaga. But during the night, each piece came to life and became a new serpent, and soon the Kikuyu were afraid to leave their *bomas*.

The *mundumugu* ascended the mountain, and when he neared the highest peak, he addressed Ngai.

"We are besieged by serpents," he said. "If you do not slay them, then the Kikuyu shall surely die as a people."

"I made the serpent, just as I made the Kikuyu and all other things," answered Ngai, who sat on His golden throne atop Kirinyaga. "And anything that I made, be it a man or a serpent or a tree or even an idea, is not repellent in My eyes. I will save you this one time, because you are young and ignorant, but you must never forget that you cannot destroy that which you find repulsive — for if you try to destroy it, it will always return one hundred times greater than before."

This is one of the reasons why the Kikuyu chose to till the soil rather than hunt the beasts of the jungle like the Wakamba, or make war on their neighbors like the Maasai, for they had no wish to see that which they destroyed return to plague them. It is a lesson taught by every *mundumugu* to his people, even after we left Kenya and emigrated to the terraformed world of Kirinyaga.

In the entire history of our tribe, only one *mundumugu* ever forgot the lesson that Ngai taught atop the holy mountain on that distant day.

And that *mundumugu* was myself.

* * *

When I awoke, I found hyena dung within the thorn enclosure of

my *boma*. That alone should have warned me that the day carried a curse, for there is no worse omen. Also the breeze, hot and dry and filled with dust, came from the west, and all good winds come from the east.

It was the day that our first immigrants were due to arrive. We had argued long and hard against allowing any newcomers to settle on Kirinyaga, for we were dedicated to the old ways of our people, and we wanted no outside influences corrupting the society that we had created. But our charter clearly stated that any Kikuyu who pledged to obey our laws and made the necessary payments to the Eutopian Council could emigrate from Kenya, and after postponing the inevitable for as long as we could, we finally agreed to accept Thomas Nkobe and his wife.

Of all the candidates for immigration, Nkobe had seemed the best. He had been born in Kenya, had grown up in the shadow of the holy mountain, and after going abroad for his schooling, had returned and run the large farm his family had purchased from one of the last European residents. Most important of all, he was a direct descendant of Jomo Kenyatta, the great Burning Spear of Kenya who had led us to independence.

I trudged out across the hot, arid savannah to the tiny landing field at Haven to greet our new arrivals, accompanied only by Ndemi, my youthful assistant. Twice buffalo blocked our path, and once Ndemi had to hurl some stones to frighten a hyena away, but eventually we reached our destination, only to discover that the Maintenance ship which was carrying Nkobe and his wife had not yet arrived. I squatted down in the shade of an acacia tree, and a moment later Ndemi crouched down beside me.

"They are late," he said, peering into the cloudless sky. "Perhaps they will not come at all."

"They will come," I said. "The signs all point to it."

"But they are bad signs, and Nkobe may be a good man."

"There are many good men," I replied. "Not all of them belong on Kirinyaga."

"You are worried, Koriba?" asked Ndemi as a pair of crested cranes walked through the dry, brittle grass, and a vulture rode the thermals overhead.

"I am concerned," I said.

"Why?"

"Because I do not know why he wants to live here."

"Why shouldn't he?" asked Ndemi, picking up a dry twig and methodically breaking it into tiny pieces. "Is it not Utopia?"

"There are many different notions of Utopia," I replied "Kirinyaga is the Kikuyu's."

"And Nkobe is a Kikuyu, so this is where he belongs," said Ndemi decisively.

"I wonder."

"Why?"

"Because he is almost 40 years old. Why did he wait so long to come here?"

"Perhaps he could not afford to come sooner."

I shook my head. "He comes from a very wealthy family."

"They have many cattle?" asked Ndemi.

"Many," I said.

"And goats?"

I nodded.

"Will he bring them with him?"

"No. He will come empty-handed, as we all did." I paused, frowning. "Why would a man who owned a large farm and had many tractors and men to do his work turn his back on all that he possessed? That is what troubles me."

"You make it sound like the way he lived on Earth was better," said Ndemi, frowning.

"Not better, just different."

He paused for a moment. "Koriba, what *is* a tractor?"

"A machine that does the work of many men in the fields."

"It sounds truly wonderful," offered Ndemi.

"It makes deep wounds in the ground and stinks of gasoline," I said, making no effort to hide my contempt.

We sat in silence for another moment. Then the Maintenance ship came into view, its descent creating a huge cloud of dust and causing a great screeching and squawking by the birds and monkeys in the nearby trees. "Well," I said, "we shall soon have our answer."

I remained in the shade until the ship had touched down and Thomas Nkobe and his wife emerged from its interior. He was a tall, well-built man dressed in casual Western clothes; she was slender and graceful, her hair elegantly braided, her khaki slacks and hunting jacket exquisitely tailored.

"Hello!" said Nkobe in English as I approached him. "I was afraid we might have to find our way to the village ourselves."

"*Jambo,*" I replied in Swahili. "Welcome to Kirinyaga."

"*Jambo,*" he amended, switching to Swahili. "Are you Koinnage?"

"No," I answered. "Koinnage is our paramount chief. You will live in his village."

"And you are?"

"I am Koriba," I said.

"He is the *mundumugu,*" added Ndemi proudly. "I am Ndemi." He paused. "Someday I will be a *mundumugu* too."

Nkobe smiled down at him. "I'm sure you will." Suddenly he remembered his wife. "And this is Wanda."

She stepped forward, smiled, and extended her hand. "A true *mundumugu!*" she said in heavily-accented Swahili. "I'm thrilled to meet you!"

"I hope you will enjoy your new life on Kirinyaga," I said, shaking her hand.

"Oh, I'm certain I will," she replied enthusiastically, as the ship disgorged their baggage and promptly took off again. She looked around at the dry savannah, and saw a trio of maribou storks and a jackal patiently waiting for a hyena to finish gorging itself on the wildebeest calf it had killed earlier in the morning. "I love it already!" She paused, then added confidentially, "I'm really the one who got Tom to agree to come here."

"Oh?"

She nodded her head. "I just couldn't stand what Kenya has become. All those factories, all that pollution! Ever since I learned about Kirinyaga, I've wanted to move here, to come back to Nature and live the way we were meant to live." She inhaled deeply. "Smell that air, Tom! It will add ten years to your life."

"You don't have to sell me any more," he said with a smile. "I'm here, aren't I?"

I turned to Wanda Nkobe. "You yourself are not Kikuyu, are you?"

"I am now," she replied. "Ever since I married Tom But to answer your question, no, I was born and raised in Oregon."

"Oregon?" repeated Ndemi, brushing some flies away from his face with his hand.

"That's in America," she explained. She paused. "By the way, why are we speaking Swahili rather than Kikuyu?"

"Kikuyu is a dead language," I said. "Most of our people no longer know it."

"I had rather hoped it would still be spoken here," she said, obviously disappointed. "I've been studying it for months."

"If you had moved to Italy, you would not speak Latin," I replied. "We still use a few Kikuyu words, just as the Italians use a few Latin words."

She was silent for a moment, then shrugged. "At least I'll have the opportunity to improve my Swahili."

"I am surprised that you are willing to forego the amenities of America for Kirinyaga," I said, studying her closely.

"I was willing years ago," she answered. "It was Tom who had to be convinced, not me." She paused. "Besides, I gave up most of those so-called amenities when I left America and moved to Kenya."

"Even Kenya has certain luxuries," I noted. "We have no electricity here, no running water, no —"

"We camp out whenever we can," she said, and I placed a hand on Ndemi's shoulder before he could chide her for interrupting the *mundumugu*. "I'm used to roughing it."

"But you have always had a home to return to."

She stared at me, an amused smile on her face. "Are you trying to talk me out of moving here?"

"No," I replied. "But I wish to point out that nothing is immutable. Any member of our society who is unhappy and wishes to leave need only inform Maintenance of the fact and a ship will arrive at Haven an hour later."

"Not us," she said. "We're in for the long haul."

"The long haul?" I repeated.

"She means that we're here to stay," explained Nkobe, putting an arm around his wife's shoulders.

A hot breeze sent the dust swirling around us.

"I think I should take you to the village," I said, shielding my eyes. "You are doubtless tired and will wish to rest."

"Not at all," said Wanda Nkobe. "This is a brand-new world. I want to look around." Her gaze fell upon Ndemi, who was staring at her intently. "Is something wrong?" she asked.

"You are very strong and sturdy," said Ndemi approvingly. "That is good. You will bear many children."

"I certainly hope not," she said. "If there's one thing Kenya has more than enough of, it's children."

"This is not Kenya," said Ndemi.

"I will find other ways to contribute to the society."

Ndemi studied her for a moment. "Well," he said at last, "I suppose you can carry firewood."

"I'm glad I meet with your approval," she said.

"But you will need a new name," continued Ndemi. "Wanda is a European name."

"It is just a name," I said. "Changing it will not make her more of a Kikuyu."

"I have no objection," she interjected. "I'm starting a new life; I *ought* to have a new name."

I shrugged. "Which name will you take as your own?"

She smiled at Ndemi. "You choose one," she said.

He furrowed his brow for a long moment, then looked up at her. "My mother's sister, who died in childbirth last year, was named Mwange, and now there is no one in the village of that name."

"Then Mwange it shall be," she said. "Mwange wa Ndemi."

"But I am not your father," said Ndemi.

She smiled at him. "You are the father of my new name."

Ndemi puffed his chest up proudly.

"Well, now that *that's* settled," said Nkobe, "what about our luggage?"

"You will not need it," I said.

"Yes, we will," said Mwange.

"You were told to bring nothing of Kenya with you."

"I've brought some *kikois* that I made myself," she said. "Surely that must be permissible, since I will be expected to weave my own fabrics and make my own clothes on Kirinyaga."

I considered her explanation for a moment, then nodded my consent. "I will send one of the village children for the bags."

"It's not that heavy," said Nkobe. "I can carry it myself."

"Kikuyu men do not fetch and carry," said Ndemi.

"What about Kikuyu women?" asked Mwange, obviously reluctant to leave the luggage behind.

"They carry firewood and grain, not bags of clothing," responded Ndemi. "*Those*," he said, pointing contemptuously toward the two leather bags, "are for children."

"Then we might as well start walking," said Mwange. "There are no children here."

Ndemi beamed with pride and strutted forward.

"Let Ndemi go first," I said. "His eyes are young and clear. He will be able to see any snakes or hyenas hiding in the tall grass."

"Do you have poisonous snakes here?" asked Nkobe.

"A few."

"Why don't you kill them?"

"Because this is not Kenya," I replied.

I walked directly behind Ndemi, and Nkobe and Mwange followed us, remarking upon the scenery and the animals to each other. After about half a mile we came to an impala ram standing directly in our path.

"Isn't he beautiful?" whispered Mwange. "Look at the horns on him!"

"I wish I had my camera with me!" said Nkobe.

"We do not permit cameras on Kirinyaga," I said.

"I know," said Nkobe. "But to be perfectly honest, I can't see how something as simple as a camera could be a corrupting influence to your society."

"To have a camera, one needs film, and one must therefore have a factory that manufactures both cameras and films. To develop the film, one needs chemicals, and then one must find a place to dump those chemicals that haven't been used. To print the pictures, one needs photographic paper, and we have barely enough wood to burn in our fires." I paused. "Kirinyaga supplies us with all of our desires. That is why we came here."

"Kirinyaga supplies you with all of your *needs,*" said Mwange. "That is not quite the same thing."

Suddenly Ndemi stopped walking and turned to her.

"This is your first day here, so you are to be forgiven your ignorance," he explained. "But no *manamouki* may argue with the *mundumugu.*"

"*Manamouki?*" she repeated. "What is a *manamouki?*"

"You are," said Ndemi.

"I've heard that word before," said Nkobe. "I think it means *wife.*"

"You are wrong," I said. "A *manamouki* is a female."

"You mean a woman?" asked Mwange.

I shook my head. "*Any* female property," I said. "A woman, a cow, a sow, a bitch, a ewe."

"And Ndemi thinks I'm some kind of property?"

"You are Nkobe's *manamouki,*" said Ndemi.

She considered it for a moment, then shrugged with amusement. "What the hell," she said in English. "If Wanda was only a name, *manamouki* is only a word. I can live with it."

"I hope so," I replied in Swahili, "for you will have to."

She turned to me. "I know we are the first immigrants to come to Kirinyaga, and that you must have your doubts about us — but this is the life I've always wanted. I'm going to be the best damned *manamouki* you ever saw."

"I hope so," I said, but I noticed that the wind still blew from the west.

* * *

I introduced Nkobe and Mwange to their neighbors, showed them their *shamba* where they would grow their food, pointed out their six cattle and ten goats and recommended that they

lock them in their *boma* at night to protect them from the hyenas, told them how to reach the river to procure water, and left them at the entrance to their hut. Mwange seemed enthused about everything, and was soon engaged in animated conversation with the women who came by to look at her strange outfit.

"She is very nice," commented Ndemi as I walked through the fields, blessing the scarecrows. "Perhaps the omens you read were wrong."

"Perhaps," I said.

He stared at me. "But you do not think so."

"No."

"Well, *I* like her," he said.

"That is your right."

"Do you dislike her, then?"

I paused as I considered my answer.

"No," I said at last. "I fear her."

"But she is just a *manamouki!*" he protested. "She can do no harm."

"Under the proper circumstances, anything can do harm."

"I do not believe it," said Ndemi.

"Do you doubt your *mundumugu*'s word?" I asked.

"No," he said uncomfortably. "If you say something, then it must be true. But I cannot understand how."

I smiled wryly. "That is because you are not yet a *mundumugu.*"

He stopped and pointed to a spot some 300 yards away, where a group of impala does were grazing.

"Can even *they* do harm?" he asked.

"Yes."

"But how?" he asked, frowning. "When danger appears, they do not confront it, but run away from it. Ngai has not blessed them with horns, so they cannot defend themselves. They are not large enough

to destroy our crops. They cannot even kick an enemy, as can the zebra. I do not understand."

"I shall tell you the tale of the Ugly Buffalo, and then you will understand," I said.

Ndemi smiled happily, for he loved stories above all things, and I led him to the shade of a thorn tree, where we both squatted down, facing each other.

"One day a cow buffalo was wandering through the savannah," I began. "The hyenas had recently taken her first calf, and she was very sad. Then she came upon a newborn impala, whose mother had been killed by hyenas that very morning.

"'I would like to take you home with me,' said the buffalo, 'for I am very lonely, and have much love in my heart. But you are not a buffalo.'

"'I, too, am very lonely,' said the impala. 'And if you leave me here, alone and unprotected, I surely will not survive the night.'

"'There is a problem,' said the buffalo. 'You are an impala, and we are buffalo. You do not belong with us.'

"'I will become the best buffalo of all,' promised the impala. 'I will eat what you eat, drink what you drink, go where you go.'

"'How can you become a buffalo? You cannot even grow horns.'

"'Then I will wear the branches of a tree upon my head.'

"'You do not wallow in the mud to protect your skin from parasites,' noted the buffalo.

"'Take me home with you and I will cover myself with more mud than any other buffalo,' said the impala.

"For every objection the buffalo raised, the impala had an answer, and finally the buffalo agreed to take the impala back with her. Most of the members of the herd thought that the impala was the ugliest buffalo they had ever seen," — Ndemi chuckled at that — "but because the impala tried so hard to act like a buffalo, they allowed her to remain.

"Then one day a number of young buffalo were grazing some distance from the herd, and they came to a deep mud wallow that blocked their way.

"'We must return to the herd,' said one of the young buffalo.

"'Why?' asked the impala. 'There is fresh grass on the other side of the wallow.'

"'Because we have been warned that a deep wallow such as this can suck us down beneath the surface and kill us.'

"'I do not believe it,' said the impala, and, bolder than her companions, she walked out to the center of the mud wallow.

"'You see?' she said. 'I have not been sucked beneath the surface. It is perfectly safe.'

"Soon three of the young buffalo ventured out across the mud wallow, and each in turn was sucked beneath the surface and drowned.

"'It is the ugly buffalo's fault,' said the king of the herd. 'It was she who told them to cross the mud wallow.'

"'But she meant no harm,' said her foster mother. 'And what she told them was true: the wallow was safe for her. All she wants is to live with the herd and be a buffalo; please do not punish her.'

"The king was blessed with more generosity than wisdom, and so he forgave the ugly buffalo.

"Then, a week later, the ugly buffalo, who could leap as high as a tall bush, jumped up in the air and saw a pack of hyenas lurking in the grass. She waited until they were almost close enough to catch her, and then cried out a warning. All the buffalo began running, but the hyenas were able to catch the ugly buffalo's foster mother, and they pulled her down and killed her.

"Most of the other buffalo were grateful to the ugly buffalo for warning them, but during the intervening week there had been a new king, and this one was wiser than the previous one.

"'It is the ugly buffalo's fault,' he said

"'How can it be her fault?' asked one of the older buffalo. 'It was she who warned us of the hyenas.'

"'But she only warned you when it was too late,' said the king. 'Had she warned you when she first saw the hyenas, her mother would still be among us. But she forgot that we cannot run as fast as she can, and so her mother is dead.'

"And the new king, though his heart was sad, decreed that the ugly buffalo must leave the herd, for there is a great difference between being a buffalo and *wanting* to be a buffalo."

I leaned back against the tree, my story completed.

"Did the ugly buffalo survive?" asked Ndemi.

I shrugged and brushed a crawling insect from my forearm. "That is another story."

"She meant no harm."

"But she caused harm nonetheless."

Ndemi traced patterns in the dirt with his finger as he considered my answer, then looked up at me. "But if she had not been with the herd, the hyenas would have killed her mother anyway."

"Perhaps."

"Then it was not her fault."

"If I fall asleep against this tree, and you see a black mamba slithering through the grass toward me, and you make no attempt to wake me, and the mamba kills me, would you be to blame for my death?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Even though it would certainly have killed me had you not been here?"

Ndemi frowned. "It is a difficult problem."

"Yes, it is."

"The mud wallow was much easier," he said. "That was surely the ugly buffalo's fault, for without her urging, the other buffalo would never have entered it."

"That is true," I said.

Ndemi remained motionless for a few moments, still wrestling with the nuances of the story.

"You are saying that there are many different ways to cause harm," he announced.

"Yes."

"And that it takes wisdom to understand who is to blame, for the foolish king did not recognize harm of the ugly buffalo's action, while the wise king knew that she was to blame for her inaction."

I nodded my head.

"I see," said Ndemi.

"And what has this to do with the *manamouki?*" I asked.

He paused again. "If harm comes to the village, you must use your wisdom to decide whether Mwange, who wants nothing more than to be a Kikuyu, is responsible for it."

"That is correct," I said, getting to my feet.

"But I still do not know what harm she can do."

"Neither do I," I answered.

"Will you know it when you see it?" he asked. "Or will it seem like a good deed, such as warning the herd that hyenas are near?"

I made no reply.

"Why are you silent, Koriba?" asked Ndemi at last.

I sighed heavily. "Because there are some questions that even a *mundumugu* cannot answer."

* * *

Ndemi was waiting for me, as usual, when I emerged from my hut five mornings later.

"*Jambo,* Koriba," he said.

I grunted a greeting and walked over to the fire that he had built,

sitting cross-legged next to it until it removed the chill from my aging bones.

"What is today's lesson?" he asked at last.

"Today I will teach you how to ask Ngai for a fruitful harvest," I answered.

"But we did that last week."

"And we will do it next week, and many more weeks as well," I answered.

"When will I learn how to make ointments to cure the sick, or how to turn an enemy into an insect so that I may step on him?"

"When you are older," I said.

"I am already old."

"And more mature."

"How will you know when I am more mature?" he persisted.

"I will know because you will have gone an entire month without asking about ointments or magic, for patience is one of the most important virtues a *mundumugu* can possess." I got to my feet. "Now take my gourds to the river and fill them with water," I said, indicating two empty water gourds.

"Yes, Koriba," he said dejectedly.

While I was waiting for him, I went into my hut, activated my computer, and instructed Maintenance to make a minor orbital adjustment that would bring rain and cooler air to the western plains.

This done, I slung my pouch around my neck and went back out into my *boma* to see if Ndemi had returned, but instead of my youthful apprentice, I found Wambu, Koinnage's senior wife, waiting for me, bristling with barely-controlled fury.

"*Jambo,* Wambu," I said.

"*Jambo,* Koriba," she replied.

"You wish to speak to me?"

She nodded. "It is about the Kenyan woman."

"Oh?"

"Yes," said Wambu. "You must make her leave!"

"What has Mwange done?" I asked.

"I am the senior wife of the paramount chief, am I not?" demanded Wambu.

"That is true."

"She does not treat me with the respect that is my due."

"In what way?" I asked.

"In *all* ways!"

"For example?"

"Her *khanga* is much more beautiful than mine. The colors are brighter, the designs more intricate, the fabric softer."

"She wove her *khanga* on her own loom, in the old way," I said.

"What difference does that make?" snapped Wambu.

I frowned. "Do you wish me to make her give you the *khanga?"* I asked, trying to understand her rage.

"No!"

"Then I do not understand," I said.

"You are no different than Koinnage!" she said, obviously frustrated that I could not comprehend her complaint. "You may be a *mundumugu,* but you are still a man!"

"Perhaps if you told me more," I suggested.

"Kibo was as silly as a child," she said, referring to Koinnage's youngest wife, "but I was training her to be a good wife. Now she wants to be like the Kenyan woman."

"But the Kenyan woman," I said, using her terminology, "wants to be like *you."*

"She cannot be like me!" Wambu practically shouted at me. "I am Koinnage's senior wife!"

"I mean that she wants to be a member of the village."

"Impossible!" scoffed Wambu. "She speaks of many strange things."

"Such as?"

"It does not matter! You must make her leave!"

"For wearing a pretty *khanga* and making a good impression on Kibo?" I said.

"Bah!" she snapped. "You are just like Koinnage! You pretend not to understand, but you know she must go!"

"I truly do not understand," I said.

"You are *my mundumugu*, not hers. I will pay you two fat goats to place a *thahu* on her."

"I will not place a curse on Mwange for the reasons you gave me," I said firmly.

She glared at me for a long moment, then spat on the ground, turned on her heel and walked back down the winding path to the village, muttering furiously to herself, practically knocking Ndemi down as he returned with my water gourds.

I spent the next two hours instructing Ndemi in the harvest prayer, then told him to go into the village and bring Mwange back. An hour later Mwange, resplendent in her *khanga*, climbed up my hill, accompanied by Ndemi, and entered my *boma*.

"*Jambo*," I greeted her.

"*Jambo*, Koriba," she replied. "Ndemi says that you wish to speak to me."

I nodded. "That is true."

"The other women seemed to think I should be frightened."

"I cannot imagine why," I said.

"Perhaps it is because you can call down the lightning, and change hyenas into insects and kill your enemies from miles away," suggested Ndemi helpfully.

"Perhaps," I said.

"Why have you sent for me?" asked Mwange.

I paused for a moment, trying to think of how best to approach the subject. "There is a problem with your clothing," I said at last.

"But I am wearing a *khanga* that I wove on my own loom," she said, obviously puzzled.

"I know," I responded. "But the quality of the fabric and the subtlety of the colors have caused a certain.. " I searched for the proper word.

"Resentment?" she suggested.

"Precisely," I answered, grateful that she so quickly comprehended the situation. "I think it would be best if you were to weave some less colorful garments."

I half-expected her to protest, but she surprised me by agreeing immediately.

"Certainly," she said. "I have no wish to offend my neighbors. May I ask who objected to my *khanga?*"

"Why?"

"I'd like to make her a present of it."

"It was Wambu," I said.

"I should have realized the effect my clothing would have. I am truly sorry, Koriba."

"Anyone may make a mistake," I said. "As long as it is corrected, no lasting harm will be done."

"I hope you're right," she said sincerely.

"He is the *mundumugu*," said Ndemi. "He is always right."

"I don't want the women to be resentful of me," continued Mwange. "Perhaps I could find some way to show my good intentions." She paused. "What if I were to offer to teach them to speak Kikuyu?"

"No *manamouki* may be a teacher," I explained. "Only the chiefs and the *mundumugu* may instruct our people."

"That's not very efficient," she said. "It may very well be that someone besides yourself and the chiefs has something to offer."

"It is possible," I agreed. "Now let me ask you a question."

"What is it?"

"Did you come to Kirinyaga to be efficient?"

She sighed. "No," she admitted. She paused for a moment. "Is there anything else?"

"No."

"Then I think I'd better go back and begin weaving my new fabric."

I nodded my approval, and she walked back down the long, winding path to the village.

"When I become *mundumugu,*" said Ndemi, watching her retreating figure, "I will not allow any *manamouki* to argue with *me.*"

"A *mundumugu* must also show understanding," I said. "Mwange is new here, and has much to learn."

"About Kirinyaga?"

I shook my head. "About *manamoukis.*"

* * *

Life proceeded smoothly and uneventfully for almost six weeks, until just after the short rains. Then one morning, just as I was preparing to go down into the village to bless the scarecrows, three of the women came up the path to my *boma.*

There was Sabo, the widow of old Kadamu, and Bori, the second wife of Sabana, and Wambu.

"We must speak with you, *mundumugu,*" said Wambu.

I sat down, cross-legged, in front of my hut, and waited for them to seat themselves opposite me.

"You may speak," I said.

"It is about the Kenyan woman," said Wambu.

"Oh?" I said. "I thought the problem was solved."

"It is not."

"Did she not present you with her *khanga* as a gift?" I asked.

"Yes."

"You are not wearing it," I noted.

"It does not fit," said Wambu.

"It is only a piece of cloth," I said. "How can it not fit?"

"It does not fit," she repeated adamantly.

I shrugged. "What is this new problem?"

"She flouts the traditions of the Kikuyu," said Wambu.

I turned to the other women. "Is this true?" I asked.

Sabo nodded. "She is a married woman, and she has not shaved her head."

"And she keeps flowers in her hut," added Bori.

"It is not the custom for Kenyan women to shave their heads," I replied. "I will instruct her to do so. As for the flowers, they are not in violation of our laws."

"But *why* does she keep them?" persisted Bori.

"Perhaps she thinks they are pleasing to the eye," I suggested.

"But now my daughter wants to grow flowers, and she answers with disrespect when I tell it her is more important to grow food to eat."

"And now the Kenyan woman has made a throne for her husband, Nkobe," put in Sabo.

"A throne?" I repeated.

"She put a back and arms on his sitting stool," said Sabo. "What man besides a chief sits upon a throne? Does she think Nkobe will replace Koinnage?"

"*Never!*" snarled Wambu.

"And she has made another throne for herself," continued Sabo "Even Wambu does not sit atop a throne."

"These are not thrones, but chairs," I said.

"Why can she not use stools, like all the other members of the village?" demanded Sabo.

"I think she is a witch," said Wambu.

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

"Just look at her," said Wambu. "She has seen the long rains come and go 35 times, and yet her back is not bent, and her skin is not wrinkled, and she has all her teeth."

"Her vegetables grow better than ours," added Sabo, "and yet she spends less time planting and tending to them than we do." She paused. "I think she *must* be a witch."

"And although she carries with her the worst of all *thahus,* that of barrenness, she acts as if she is not cursed at all," said Bori.

"And her new garments are still more beautiful than ours," muttered Sabo sullenly.

"That is true," agreed Bori. "Now Sabana is displeased with me because his *kikoi* is not so bright and soft as Nkobe's."

"And my daughters all want thrones instead of sitting stools," added Sabo. "I tell them that we have scarcely enough wood for the fire, and they say that this is more important. She has turned their heads. They no longer respect their elders."

"The young women all listen to her, as if *she* were the wife of a chief instead of a barren *manamouki,*" complained Wambu. "You must send her away, Koriba."

"Are you giving me an order, Wambu?" I asked softly, and the other two women immediately fell silent.

"She is an evil witch, and she must go," insisted Wambu, her outrage overcoming her fear of disobeying her *mundumugu.*

"She is not a witch," I said, "for if she were, then I, your *mundumugu,* would certainly know it. She is just a *manamouki* who is trying to learn our ways, and who, as you note, carries the terrible *thahu* of barrenness with her."

"If she is less than a witch, she is still more than a *manamouki,*" said Sabo.

"More in what way?" I asked.

"Just more," she answered with a sullen expression.

Which totally summed up the problem.

"I will speak to her again," I said.

"And you will make her shave her head?" demanded Wambu.

"Yes."

"And remove the flowers from her hut?"

"I will discuss it."

"Perhaps you can tell Nkobe to beat her from time to time," added Sabo. "Then she would not act so much like a chief's wife."

"I feel very sorry for him," said Bori.

"For Nkobe?" I asked.

Bori nodded. "To be cursed with such a wife, and further, to have no children."

"He is a good man," agreed Sabo. "He deserves better than the Kenyan woman."

"It is my understanding that he is perfectly happy with Mwange," I said.

"That is all the more reason to pity him, for being so foolish," said Wambu.

"Have you come here to talk about Mwange or Nkobe?" I asked.

"We have said what we have come to say," replied Wambu, getting to her feet. "You must do something, *mundumugu.*"

"I will look into the matter," I said.

She walked down the path to the village, followed by Sabo. Bori, her back bent from carrying firewood all her life, her stomach distended from producing three sons and five daughters, all but nine of her teeth missing, her legs permanently bowed from some childhood disease, Bori, who had seen but 34 long rains, stood before me for a moment.

"She really *is* a witch, Koriba," she said. "You have only to look at her to know it."

Then she, too, left my hill and returned to the village.

* * *

Once again I summoned Mwange to my *boma.*

She came up the path with the graceful stride of a young girl, lithe and lean and filled with energy.

"How old are you, Mwange?" I asked as she approached me.

"38," she replied. "I usually tell people that I'm 35, though," she added with a smile. She stood still for a moment. "Is that why you asked me to come here? To talk about my age?"

"No," I said. "Sit down, Mwange."

She seated herself on the dirt by the ashes of my morning fire, and I squatted across from her.

"How are you adjusting to your new life on Kirinyaga?" I asked at last.

"Very well," she said enthusiastically. "I've made many friends, and I find that I don't miss the amenities of Kenya at all."

"Then you are happy here?"

"Very."

"Tell me about your friends."

"Well, my closest friend is Kibo, Koinnage's youngest wife, and I have helped Shumi and Kalena with their gardens, and —"

"Have you no friends among the older women?" I interrupted.

"Not really," she admitted.

"Why should that be?" I asked. "They are women of your own age."

"We don't seem to have anything to talk about."

"Do you find them unfriendly?" I asked.

She considered the question. "Ndemi's mother has always been very kind to me. The others could be a little friendlier, I suppose, but I imagine that's just because most of them are senior wives and are very busy running their households."

"Did it ever occur to you that there could be some other reason why they are not friendly?" I suggested.

"What are you getting at?" she asked, suddenly alert.

"There is a problem," I said.

"Oh?"

"Some of the older women resent your presence."

"Because I'm an immigrant?" she asked.

I shook my head. "No."

"Then why?" she persisted, genuinely puzzled.

"It is because we have a very rigid social order here, and you have not yet fit in."

"I thought I was fitting in very well," she said defensively.

"You were mistaken."

"Give me an example."

I looked at her. "You know that Kikuyu wives must shave their heads, and yet you have not done so."

She sighed and touched her hair. "I know," she replied. "I've been meaning to, but I'm very fond of it. I'll shave my head tonight." She seemed visibly relieved. "Is that what this is all about?"

"No," I said. "That is merely an outward sign of the problem."

"Then I don't understand."

"It is difficult to explain," I said. "Your *khangas* are more pleasing to the eye than theirs. Your garden grows better. You are as old as Wambu, but appear younger than her daughters. In their minds, these things set you apart from them and make you more than a *manamouki*. The corollary, which they have not yet voiced but must surely feel, is that if you are somehow *more,* then this makes them somehow *less."*

"What do you expect me to do?" she asked. "Wear rags and let my gardens go to seed?"

"No," I said. "I do not expect that."

"Then what can I do?" she continued. "You're telling me that they feel threatened because I am competent." She paused. "*You* are a competent man, Koriba. You have been schooled in Europe and

America, you can read and write and work a computer. And yet I notice that you feel no need to hide your talents."

"I am a *mundumugu,*" I said. "I live alone on my hill, removed from the village, and I am viewed with awe and fear by my people. This is the function of a *mundumugu.* It is not the function of a *manamouki,* who must live in the village and find her place in the social order of the tribe."

"That's what I am trying to do," she said in frustration.

"Do not try so hard."

"If you're not telling me to be incompetent, then I *still* don't understand."

"One does not fit in by being different," I said "For example, I know that you bring flowers into your house. Doubtless they are fragrant and pleasing to the eye, but no other woman in the village decorates her hut with flowers."

"That's not true," she said defensively. "Shumi does."

"If so, then she does it because *you* do it," I pointed out. "Can you see that this is even more threatening to the older women than if you alone kept flowers, for it challenges their authority?"

She stared at me, trying to comprehend.

"They have spent their entire lives achieving their positions within the tribe," I continued, "and now you have come here and taken a position entirely outside of their order. We have a new world to populate: You are barren, but far from feeling shame or grief, you act as though this is not a terrible *thahu.* Such an attitude is contrary to their experience, just as decorating your house with flowers or creating *khangas* with intricate patterns is contrary to their experience, and thus they feel threatened."

"I still don't see what I can do about it," she protested. "I gave my original *khangas* to Wambu, but she refuses to wear them. And I have offered to show Bori how to get a greater yield from her gardens, but she won't listen."

"Of course not," I replied. "Senior wives will not accept advice from a *manamouki*, any more than a chief would accept advice from a newly-circumcised young man. You must simply" — here I switched to English, for there is no comparable term in Swahili — "maintain a low profile. If you do so, in time the problems will go away."

She paused for a moment, considering what I had told her.

"I'll try," she said at last.

"And if you *must* do something that will call attention to yourself," I continued, reverting to Swahili, "try to do it in a way that will not offend."

"I didn't even know I *was* offending," she said. "How am I to avoid it if I'm calling attention to myself?"

"There are ways," I answered. "Take, for example, the chair that you built."

"Tom has had back spasms for years," she said. "I built the chair because he couldn't get enough support from a stool. Am I supposed to let my husband suffer because some of the women don't believe in chairs?"

"No," I said. "But you can tell the younger women that Nkobe ordered you to build the chair, and thus the stigma will not be upon you."

"Then it will be upon him."

I shook my head. "Men have far greater leeway here than women. There will be no stigma upon him for ordering his *manamouki* to see to his comfort." I paused long enough for the thought to sink in. "Do you understand?"

She sighed. "Yes."

"And you will do as I suggest?"

"If I'm to live in peace with my neighbors, I suppose I must."

"There is always an alternative," I said.

She shook her head vigorously. "I've dreamed of a place like this

all my life, and nobody is going to make me leave it now that I'm here. I'll do whatever I have to do."

"Good," I said, getting to my feet to signify that the interview was over. "Then the problem will soon be solved."

But, of course, it wasn't.

* * *

I spent the next two weeks visiting a neighboring village whose chief had died quite suddenly. He had no sons and no brothers, and the line of succession was in doubt. I listened to all the applicants to the throne, discussed the situation with the Council of Elders until there was unanimity, presided at the ceremony that installed the new chief in his ceremonial robes and headdress, and finally returned to my own village.

As I climbed the path to my *boma,* I saw a female figure sitting just outside my hut. I drew closer and saw that it was Shima, Ndemi's mother.

"*Jambo,* Koriba," she said.

"*Jambo,* Shima," I responded.

"You are well, I trust."

"As well as an old man can feel after walking for most of the day," I responded, sitting down opposite her. I looked around my *boma.* "I do not see Ndemi."

"I sent him to the village for the afternoon, because I wished to speak to you alone."

"Does this concern Ndemi?" I asked.

She shook her head. "It is about Mwange."

I sighed wearily. "Proceed."

"I am not like the other women, Koriba," she began. "I have always been good to Mwange."

"So she has told me."

"Her ways do not bother me," she continued. "After all, someday I shall be the mother of the *mundumugu,* and while there can be many senior wives, there can be only one *mundumugu* and one *mundumugu*'s mother."

"This is true," I said, waiting for her to get to the point of her visit.

"Therefore, I have befriended Mwange, and have shown her many kindnesses, and she has responded in kind."

"I am pleased to hear it."

"And because I have befriended her," continued Shima, "I have felt great compassion for her, because as you know she carries the *thahu* of barrenness. And it seemed to me that, since Nkobe is such a wealthy man, that he should take another wife, to help Mwange with the work on the *shamba* and to produce sons and daughters." She paused. "My daughter Shumi, as you know, will be circumcised before the short rains come, and so I approached Mwange as a friend, and as the mother of the future *mundumugu,* to suggest that Nkobe pay the bride price for Shumi." Here she paused again, and frowned. "She got very mad and yelled at me. You must speak to her, Koriba. A rich man like Nkobe should not be forced to live with only a barren wife."

"Why do you keep calling Nkobe a rich man?" I asked. "His *shamba* is small, and he has only six cattle."

"His family is rich," she stated. "Ndemi told me that they have many men and machines to do their planting and harvesting."

*Thank you for nothing, little Ndemi,* I thought irritably. Aloud I said: "All that is back on Earth. Here Nkobe is a poor man."

"Even if he is poor," said Shima, "he will not remain poor, for grain and vegetables grow for Mwange as for no one else, as if this is Ngai's blessing to make up for His *thahu* of barrenness." She stared at me. "You must talk to her, Koriba. This would be a good thing. Shumi is very obedient and hard-working, and she already likes Mwange very much We will not demand a large bride price,

for we know that the *mundumugu*'s family will never go hungry."

"Why did you not wait for Nkobe to approach you, as is the custom?" I asked.

"I thought if I explained my idea to Mwange, she would see the wisdom of it and speak to Nkobe herself, for he listens to her more than most husbands listen to their wives, and surely the thought of a fertile woman who would share her chores would appeal to her."

"Well, you have presented your idea to her," I said. "Now it is up to Nkobe to make the offer or choose not to."

"But she says that she will permit him to marry no one else," answered Shima, more puzzled than outraged, "as if a *manamouki* could stop her husband from buying another wife. She is ignorant of our ways, Koriba, and for this reason you must speak with her. You must point out that she should be grateful to have another woman with whom to speak and share the work, and she should not want Nkobe to die without having fathered any children just because *she* has been cursed." She hesitated for a moment, and then concluded: "And you should remind her that Shumi will someday be sister to the *mundumugu*."

"I am glad that you are so concerned about Mwange's future," I said at last.

She caught the trace of sarcasm in my voice.

"Is it so wrong to be concerned about my little Shumi as well?" she demanded.

"No," I admitted. "No, it is not wrong."

"Oh!" said Shima, as if she had suddenly remembered something important. "When you speak to Mwange, remind her that she is named for my sister."

"I do not intend to speak to Mwange at all."

"Oh?"

"No," I said. "As you yourself pointed out, this is not her concern. I will speak to Nkobe."

"And you will mention Shumi?" she persisted.

"I will speak to Nkobe," I answered noncommittally.

She got to her feet and prepared to leave.

"You can do me a favor, Shima," I said.

"Oh?"

I nodded. "Have Ndemi come to my *boma* immediately. I have many tasks for him to do here."

"How can you be sure, since you have only just returned?"

"I am sure," I said adamantly.

She looked across my *boma,* still the protective mother. "I can see no chores that have been left undone."

"Then I will find some," I said.

* * *

I went down to the village in the afternoon, for old Siboki needed ointments to keep the pain from his joints, and Koinnage had asked me to help him settle a dispute between Njoro and Sangora concerning the ownership of a calf that their jointly-owned cow had just produced.

When I had finished my business there, I placed charms on some of the scarecrows, and then, in midafternoon, I walked over to Nkobe's *shamba,* where I found him herding his cattle.

"*Jambo,* Koriba!" he greeted me, waving his hand.

"*Jambo,* Nkobe," I replied, approaching him.

"Would you like to come into my hut for some *pombe?*" he offered. "Mwange just brewed it yesterday."

"Thank you for the offer, but I do not care to drink warm *pombe* on a hot afternoon like this."

"It's actually quite cool," he said. "She buries the gourd in the ground to keep it that way."

"Then I will have some," I acquiesced, falling into step beside him as he drove his cattle toward his *boma.*

Mwange was waiting for us, and she invited us into the cool interior of the hut and poured our *pombe* for us, then began to leave, for *manamoukis* do not listen to the conversation of men.

"Stay here, Mwange," I said.

"You're sure?" she said.

"Yes."

She shrugged and sat on the floor, with her back propped up against a wall of the hut.

"What brings you here, Koriba?" asked Nkobe, sitting gingerly upon his chair, and I could see that his back was troubling him. "You have not paid us a visit before."

"The *mundumugu* rarely visits those who are healthy enough to visit *him,*" I replied.

"Then this is a special occasion," said Nkobe.

"Yes," I replied, sipping my *pombe.* "This is a special occasion."

"What is it this time?" asked Mwange warily.

"What do you mean, 'this time'?" said Nkobe sharply.

"There have been some minor problems," I answered, "none of which concern you."

"Anything that affects Mwange concerns me," responded Nkobe. "I am not blind or deaf, Koriba. I know that the older women have refused to accept her — and I'm getting more than a little bit angry about it. She has gone out of her way to fit in here, and has met them more than halfway."

"I did not come here to discuss Mwange with you," I said.

"Oh?" he said suspiciously.

"Are you saying we have a problem that concerns *him?*" demanded Mwange.

"It concerns both of you," I replied. "That is why I have come here."

"All right, Koriba — what is it?" said Nkobe.

"You have made a good effort to fit into the community and to live as a Kikuyu, Nkobe," I said. "And yet there is one more thing that you will be expected to do, and it is this that I have come to discuss with you."

"And what is that?"

"Sooner or later, you will be expected to take another wife."

"I knew it!" said Mwange.

"I'm very happy with the wife I have," said Nkobe with unconcealed hostility.

"That may be," I said, draining the last of my *pombe,* "but you have no children, and as Mwange gets older she will need someone to help her with her duties."

"Now you listen to me!" snapped Nkobe. "I came here because I thought it would make Mwange happy. So far she's been ostracized and shunned and gossiped about, and now you're telling me that I have to take another wife into my house so that Mwange can keep being spat on by the other women? We don't need this, Koriba! I was just as happy on my farm in Kenya. I can go back there any time I want."

"If that is the way you feel, then perhaps you should return to Kenya," I said.

"*Tom,*" said Mwange, staring at him, and he fell silent.

"It is true that you do not have to stay," I continued. "But you are Kikuyus, living on a Kikuyu world, and if you do stay, you will be expected to act as Kikuyus."

"There's no law that says a Kikuyu man must take a second wife," said Nkobe sullenly.

"No, there is no such law," I admitted. "Nor is there a law that says a Kikuyu man must father children. But these are our traditions, and you will be expected to abide by them."

"To hell with them!" he muttered in English.

Mwange laid a restraining hand on his arm. "There is a coterie of young warriors who live beyond the forest," she said. "Why don't *they* marry some of the young women? Why should the men of the village monopolize them all?"

"They cannot afford wives," I said. "That is why they live alone."

"That's *their* problem," said Nkobe.

"I've made many sacrifices in the name of communal harmony," said Mwange, "but this is asking too much, Koriba. We are happy just the way we are, and we intend to stay this way."

"You will not remain happy."

"What does that mean?" she demanded.

"Next month is the circumcision ritual," I said. "When it is over, there will be many girls eligible for marriage, and since you are barren, it is only reasonable to suppose that a number of their families will suggest that Nkobe pay the bride price for their daughters. He may refuse once, he may refuse twice, but if he continues to refuse, he will offend most of the village. They will assume that because he comes from Kenya he feels their women are not good enough for him, and they will be further offended by the fact that he refuses to have children with which to populate our empty planet."

"Then I'll explain my reasons to them," said Nkobe.

"They will not understand," I answered.

"No, they will not understand," agreed Mwange unhappily.

"Then they will have to learn to live with it," said Nkobe firmly.

"And you will have to learn to live with silence and animosity," I said. "Is this the life you envisioned when you came to Kirinyaga?"

"Of course not!" snapped Nkobe. "But nothing can make me —"

"We will think about it, Koriba," interrupted Mwange.

Nkobe turned to his wife, stunned. "What are you saying?"

"I am saying that we will think about it," repeated Mwange.

"That is all that I ask," I said, getting to my feet and walking to the door of the hut.

"You demand a lot, Koriba," said Mwange bitterly.

"I demand nothing," I replied. "I merely suggest."

"Coming from the *mundumugu*, is there a difference?"

I did not answer her, because in truth there was no difference whatsoever.

* * *

"You seem unhappy, Koriba," said Ndemi.

He had just finished feeding my chickens and my goats, and now he sat down beside me in the shade of my acacia tree.

"I am," I said.

"Mwange," he said, nodding his head.

"Mwange," I agreed.

Two weeks had passed since I had visited her and Nkobe.

"I saw her this morning, when I went to the river to fill your gourds," said Ndemi. "She, too, seems unhappy."

"She is," I said. "And there is nothing that I can do about it."

"But you are the *mundumugu*."

"I know."

"You are the most powerful of men," continued Ndemi. "Surely you can put an end to her sorrow."

I sighed. "The *mundumugu* is both the most powerful and the weakest of men. In Mwange's case, I am the weakest."

"I do not understand."

"The *mundumugu* is the most powerful of men when it comes to interpreting the law," I said. "But he is also the weakest of men, for it is he, of all men, who must be bound by that law, no matter what else happens." I paused. "I should allow her to be what she can be, instead of being merely a *manamouki*. And failing that, I should

make her leave Kirinyaga and return to Kenya." I sighed again. "But she must behave like a *mamamouki* if she is to have a life here, and she has broken no law that would allow me to force her to leave."

Ndemi frowned. "Being a *mundumugu* can be more difficult than I thought."

I smiled at him and placed a hand upon his head. "Tomorrow I will begin to teach you to make the ointments that cure the sick."

"Really?" he said, his face brightening.

I nodded. "Your last statement tells me that you are no longer a child."

"I have not been a child for many rains," he protested.

"Do not say any more," I told him with a wry smile, "or we will do more harvest prayers instead."

He immediately fell silent, and I looked out across the distant savannah, where a swirling tower of dust raced across the arid plain, and wondered, for perhaps the thousandth time, what to do about Mwange.

How long I sat thus, motionless, I do not know, but eventually I felt Ndemi tugging at the blanket I had wrapped around my shoulders.

"Women," he whispered.

"What?" I said, not comprehending.

"From the village," he said, gesturing toward the path that led to my *boma*.

I looked where he indicated and saw four of the village women approaching. There was Wambu, and Sabo, and Bori, and with them this time was Morina, the second wife of Kimoda.

"Should I leave?" asked Ndemi.

I shook my head. "If you are to become a *mundumugu*, it is time you started listening to a *mundumugu*'s problems."

The four women stopped perhaps ten feet away from me.

*"Jambo,"* I said, staring at them.

"The Kenyan witch must leave!" said Wambu.

"We have been through this before," I said.

"But now she has broken the law," said Wambu.

"Oh?" I said. "In what way?"

Wambu grabbed Morina by the arm and shoved her even closer to me. "Tell him," she said triumphantly.

"She has bewitched my daughter," said Morina, obviously uneasy in my presence.

"How has Mwange bewitched your daughter?" I asked.

"My Muri was a good, obedient child," said Muri. "She always helped me grind the grain, and she dutifully cared for her two younger brothers when I was working in the fields, and she never left the thorn gate open at night so that hyenas could enter our *boma* and kill our goats and cattle." She paused, and I could see that she was trying very hard not to cry. "All she could talk about since the last long rains was her forthcoming circumcision ceremony, and who she hoped would pay the bride price for her. She was a perfect daughter, a daughter any mother would be proud of." Now a tear trickled down her cheek. "And then the Kenyan woman came, and Muri spent her time with her, and now" — suddenly the single tear became a veritable flood — "now she tells me that she refuses to be circumcised. She will never marry and she will die an old, barren woman!"

Morina could speak no more, and began beating her breasts with her clenched fists.

"That is not all," added Wambu. "The reason Muri does not wish to be circumcised is because the Kenyan woman herself has not been circumcised. And yet the Kenyan woman has married a Kikuyu man, and has tried to live among us as his *manamouki.*" She glared at me. "She has broken the law, Koriba! We must cast her out!"

"I am the *mundumugu*," I replied sternly. "I will decide what must be done."

"You *know* what must be done!" said Wambu furiously.

"That is all," I said. "I will hear no more."

Wambu glared at me, but did not dare to disobey me, and finally, turning on her heel, she stalked back down the path to the village, followed by Sabo and the still-wailing Morina.

Bori stood where she was for an extra moment, then turned to me.

"It is as I told you before, Koriba," she said, almost apologetically. "She really *is* a witch."

Then she, too, began walking back to the village.

"What will you do, Koriba?" asked Ndemi.

"The law is clear," I said wearily. "No uncircumcised woman may live with a Kikuyu man as his wife."

"Then you will make her leave Kirinyaga?"

"I will offer her a choice," I said, "and I will hope that she chooses to leave."

"It is too bad," said Ndemi. "She has tried very hard to be a good *manamouki*."

"I know," I said.

"Then why is Ngai visiting her with such unhappiness?"

"Because sometimes trying is not enough."

* * *

We stood at Haven — Mwange, Nkobe, and I — awaiting the Maintenance ship's arrival.

"I am truly sorry that things did not work out," I said sincerely.

Nkobe glared at me, but said nothing.

"It didn't have to end this way," said Mwange bitterly.

"We had no choice," I said. "If we are to create our Utopia here on Kirinyaga, we must be bound by its rules."

"The fact that a rule exists does not make it right, Koriba," she said. "I gave up almost everything to live here, but I will not let them mutilate me in the name of some foolish custom."

"Without our traditions, we are not Kikuyu, but only Kenyans who live on another world," I pointed out.

"There is a difference between tradition and stagnation, Koriba," she said. "If you stifle every variation in taste and behavior in the name of the former, you achieve only the latter." She paused. "I would have been a good member of the community."

"But a poor *manamouki*," I said. "The leopard may be a stealthy hunter and fearsome killer, but he does not belong among a pride of lions."

"Lions and leopards have been extinct for a long time, Koriba," she said. "We are talking about human beings, not animals, and no matter how many rules you make and no matter how many traditions you invoke, you cannot make all human beings think and feel and act alike."

"It's coming," announced Nkobe as the Maintenance ship broke through the thin cloud cover.

"*Kwaheri*, Nkobe," I said, extending my hand.

He looked contemptuously at my hand for a moment, then turned his back and continued watching the Maintenance ship.

I turned to Mwange.

"I tried, Koriba," she said. "I really did."

"No one ever tried harder," I said. "*Kwaheri*, Mwange."

She stared at me, her face suddenly an emotionless mask.

"Good-bye, Koriba," she said in English. "And my name is Wanda."

* * *

The next morning Shima came to me to complain that Shum,

had rejected the suitor that had been arranged for her.

Two days later Wambu complained to me that Kibo, Koinnage's youngest wife, had decorated her hut with colorful ribbons, and was beginning to let her hair grow.

And the morning after that, Kimi, who had only one son, announced that she wanted no more children.

"I thought it had ended," I said with a sigh as I watched Sangora, Kimi's distressed husband, walk back down the path to the village.

"That is because you have made a mistake, Koriba."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because you believed the wrong story," answered Ndemi with the confidence of youth.

"Oh?"

He nodded. "You believed the story about the Ugly Buffalo."

"And which story should I have believed?"

"The story of the *mundumugu* and the serpent."

"Why do you think one story is more worthy of belief than the other?" I asked him.

"Does not the story of the *mundumugu* and the serpent tell us that we cannot be rid of that which Ngai created simply because we find it repugnant or unsettling?"

"That is true," I said.

Ndemi smiled and held up three fingers. "Shumi, Kibo, Kimi," he said, counting them off. "Three serpents have returned already. There are 97 yet to come."

And suddenly I had the awful premonition that he was right.

*Ivory is probably my most successful novel to date. It sold pretty well, and was nominated for both the Nebula and Clarke awards. So when Chuq von Rospach, editor of the Hugo-nominated fanzine* OtherRealms, *asked me to write a piece about its creation, I was more than happy to.*

# African Genesis

CHUQ HAS SENT OUT a call for some Where-Do-You-Get-Those-Crazy-Ideas articles, and since the genesis of my forthcoming novel, *Ivory: A Legend of Past and Future,* is still fresh and clear in my mind, I decided to take him up on it.

Back in 1983 or 1984, while I was researching something quite different about Africa, I came across a mention of an animal known only as the Kilimanjaro Elephant. It was an evocative name that seemed to have a mythic quality to it, so I began finding out what I could about this elephant — and what I found fascinated me.

In the *Rowland Ward Book of Big Game Records,* the top 200 trophy animals of every African species are listed. Usually the difference between the Number One and Number Twenty animals is half an inch, or a quarter of a pound. Not so with the Kilimanjaro Elephant: his tusks weighed 237 and 225 pounds, and no other tusk in history ever went over 190 pounds. He was a monster among his own kind.

There was more, too — or, rather, curiously less. With almost every other animal in the book, they know the date it was killed, who shot it, what kind of bullet was used, where it was shot, who the guide or white hunter was, what the animal's measurements were. Not so the Kilimanjaro Elephant: they think, but do not know, that he was killed on the northern slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro; they suspect, but do not know, that he was killed in 1898; they surmise, but do not know, that he was killed by an escaped slave. And that constitutes everything that is known about him.

Well, everything prior to his death, anyway. His ivory turned up for auction at Zanzibar in 1898. One tusk, the larger one, was bought by an American, who was to pick it up in Cairo. It was shipped north with a slave caravan, but the caravan was raided and the tusk disappeared for twelve years, finally turning up in Brussels. The other tusk went to Belgium, then India, and ultimately England. Finally the British Museum of Natural History bought the pair of them in 1932, and after an attempt was made to steal them in 1937, they were taken off exhibit and stored away in a vault beneath the museum, where they still reside. I wrote to the curator for permission to examine them, and finally got to see them in May of 1985. They are magnificent, each measuring more than ten feet long and two feet in circumference at the base.

I then began tracing every reference I could find in my voluminous African library, and finally plotted out a mainstream novel, which would follow the Kilimanjaro Elephant for the last month of his life, and then follow the ivory on an entirely fictitious journey until it wound up in the British Museum.

I called Eleanor Wood, my agent, bubbling with enthusiasm about the story. She listened politely, then told me that if I did a bang-up job on it, she might be able to get me as much as I could get for a short story for *Omni*. Whereas, she continued, if I would remember that I am supposed to be a science fiction writer and that that's

where my audience is, and if I would follow the ivory not just to England but into space, and not just for a period of 34 years but for five or six millennia, she could get me 30 or 40 times as much as a short story for *Omni*.

A word to the wise was sufficient, and I began expanding the scope of the book — and suddenly realized that I could tell a much more powerful tale with this approach I created two framing devices — a future researcher for the 64th-Century equivalent of Rowland Ward, and the spirit of the Kilimanjaro Elephant – and each told alternating sections of the book. The main novel, about 60,000 words, was a straight-line narrative by the researcher. But as he keeps searching for the ivory, the story segues into about a dozen incidents, perhaps 90,000 words total, in which the tusks appear at various times and places — as stakes in a poker game, as objects of alien religious rites, as pawns in a scholarly battle between two paleontologists, and so forth. I told these tales of the ivory non-sequentially for reasons I hope will be clear to the reader by the time he finishes the book.

This approach allowed me to write about the foibles and nobilities of Man, which is the business of every writer, rather than some silly hide-and-seek adventure about a pair of elephant tusks, and the main continuing story allowed me to enlist the metaphysical as well as the factual in accessing the human condition.

Since a couple of the stories occurred during the elephant's lifetime, all that remained was to take a safari to Kenya in 1986 and retrace his steps on his last journey from the Tana River to the slopes of Kilimanjaro, which I did — and which I also wrote up and sold as an article to *Swara*, the journal of the East African Wildlife Society.

Then it was just a matter of sitting down and writing *Ivory: A Legend of Past and Future*, which took about five months I think the hardest part was creating differing technologies and

backgrounds — none of them important to the plot, but each of them vitally important to the verisimilitude of the story — for a dozen different future eras. The pre-publication reviews it has received thus far all agree that it is my best novel to date, and I have no serious argument with that assessment. When it is published by Tor this summer, it will not only have a jacket by Michael Whelan, but will also feature a photograph of the Kilimanjaro Elephant's tusks — quite possibly the first time in history that a work of fiction will feature a frontispiece displaying its non-fictional source.

*When I was a young man, I would have given just about anything to be allowed to write a Tarzan story. By the time I actually got around to it —in this excerpt from my 1985 novel* Adventures *—I have a feeling that my views had changed sufficiently to start Edgar Rice Burroughs spinning non-stop in his grave.*

# The Lord of the Jungle

Me and the Lord spent the next couple of weeks walking in a northerly direction and discussing just how much of our modest fortune should go into the actual building of our tabernacle and how much should be held back for the two of us to live on.

I also learned that having a pocketful of gemstones is a hell of a lot different from wanting one. Now that I was a wealthy man, I was so worried about highwaymen and other rogues robbing a law-abiding citizen like myself that I carefully avoided all cities and military outposts, and even made a huge detour that took me a good forty miles out of my way rather than chance running into a safari that I heard up ahead.

In point of fact, it was all this maneuvering that got me lost. I started hitting one forest after another, which I knew meant I was having some slight difficulty, since British East ain't got no forests, and pretty soon there weren't any gaps at all between them, and then it started doing a little serious nonstop raining, and I soon got to the

point where I would gladly have traded the Lord's share of the stones for a raincoat and a map.

Also, as I walked along I kept getting the feeling that I was being watched by unseen eyes, which in my broad experience on the Dark Continent are the very worst kind of eyes to be watched by. Finally one day I started seeing huge manlike shapes way off in the distance, so I figured I was in gorilla country and spent most of my waking hours trying to recollect whether or not gorillas ate people. I even did a little serious lumbering and grunting in the hope that they might think I was one of them, but then I got to figuring that I looked pretty feminine as gorillas went and I didn't want to have to fight off no impassioned bull gorillas, or even bull chimpanzees if push came to shove, so I went back to walking like the good-looking God-fearing white man that I am.

I spent another couple of days in the muck and mire of the forest floor and was just about sure I was lost beyond salvation when an arrow thudded home about three inches from my head as I leaned up against a huge old tree. I looked up just in time to see a tall, bronzed white man wearing nothing but a dagger and loincloth step out from behind some bushes, with a bow and a couple of arrows clutched in his right hand.

"What are you doing in my jungle?" he demanded in deep, stern tones.

"Looking for a way out," I told him sincerely.

"And who are you?" he asked, glaring at me.

"The Right Reverend Honorable Doctor Lucifer Jones at your service," I said, flashing him a big Sunday-morning smile. "Preaching and salvation done cheap, with a group rate for funerals."

"Good!" he said, sighing deeply and looking mightily relieved. "I was afraid you might be from Barrow, Phillips, and Smythe."

"Who are they?"

"My British creditors."

"You expect them to follow you here?" I asked.

"You've no idea how firm their resolve can be," he said. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am John Caldwell, Lord Bloomstoke."

"Make up your mind," I said.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Which are you· Caldwell or Bloomstoke?"

"Both. One is a title. Unfortunately, it costs a lot more to support a title these days than it ever used to, and finally I had to flee the country to avoid my creditors and their solicitors."

"But why here?" I asked. "I ain't seen naught but grubworms and an occasional monkey in days."

"I thought I was purchasing an up-to-date plantation," he admitted. "You can imagine my distress when I found out that what I really owned was six square miles of the Ituri Rain Forest."

"Who'd you buy it from?" I asked, just out of politeness.

"A realtor with absolutely impeccable credentials," replied Bloomstoke. "What was his name now? Ah, yes — Von Horst."

"Figgers," I said.

"You know of him?"

"In a manner of speaking," I answered. "How long have you been out here?"

"Four years, as near as I can tell."

"That's a long time to be stuck in the bush," I remarked. "What do you do to keep from going nuts?"

"Oh, I spend a lot of the time talking to my friends," he said.

"Friends?" I repeated. "You got friends stashed away around here?"

"Watch," he said with a smile. Then he put his fingers to his lips and let out a weird whistle, and a couple of minutes later a pair of gorillas broke into a clearing about thirty yards away. Bloomstoke

immediately started jabbering at them in some guttural language I hadn't never heard before, and they nodded their heads and disappeared back into the forest.

"Are you telling me they understand you?" I asked.

"Absolutely," he said. "I studied French at Oxford. There's very little difference, except that apes have only the haziest understanding of the future imperfect except as it relates to hunting for grubworms."

"You're pulling my leg, right?"

"Not a bit." He smiled. "If you have any messages for them, I'll be happy to translate for you. Of course, you have to be a little careful with your idioms For example, if I were to tell them that you thought we were pulling your leg, and I didn't remember to drop half a tone on the double *arrrgeth* sound, they would immediately come over and pull your leg off." He paused. "But aside from such minor technicalities, we have quite excellent conversations. Of course, it's not as if they can discuss Plato's *Republic* with any depth of understanding, but on the other hand they also can't discuss Sartre and Descartes at all, which I for one consider a definite plus."

"And you live with these here gorillas?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," he said happily. "In fact, I've worked my way up into their hierarchy due to my physical prowess. You see, apes fight for their various leadership positions. At this very moment," he added with more than a touch of pride, "I am Assistant to the Second Vice President."

"Now, I would have sworn they had a king," I said, shaking my head in wonderment.

"Oh, they used to, before we started discussing the problems inherent in constitutional monarchies," replied Bloomstoke. "We currently have a very limited republic, but I won't quit until we've established a true socialist state."

"Well, Brother Bloomstoke," I said, "it sure sounds like you've accomplished quite a lot in just four years' time."

"Thank you," he said modestly. "But there's so much to do! My God, do you realize that we haven't even taken the first small steps toward establishing a group medical plan?"

"I would imagine that most of your medical emergencies consist of being et by lions and leopards and the like, and as such would be somewhat beyond the scope of a group plan," I opined.

"True," he admitted. "But you can't just have a bureaucracy and not give it anything to do. That's just plain wasteful. No, Doctor Jones, I appreciate your kind words, truly I do, but there is so much left undone."

"Seems to me you've done more than enough," I said soothingly.

He shook his head sadly. "Even our military establishment can't seem to function efficiently."

"You got a military establishment?" I asked, surprised.

"Of course," he said. "Our economy was in a shambles. We couldn't see any way of bringing it back to life except by gearing up for a little war."

"Who are you going to fight with — elephants?"

"That's not an issue at this point," he said. "When we're geared up and ready, we'll find an enemy."

"Have you considered the possibility that maybe you bit off a little more than you can chew?" I suggested.

"Sometimes it feels that way," he admitted with a deep sigh. "I mean, I speak to them of Romeo and Juliet, or Arthur and Guinevere, and all they want to do is enter into uncomplicated relationships with other apes. That's all right; I can accept that. I really can But when I try to discuss welfare statism and all they want to do is peel bananas..." His voice trailed off, and his handsome face contorted as he fought to hold back a manly little sob

"Look at the bright side," I said. "You got your health, you ain't

sitting in a debtor's prison, and you've actually learned their language."

"I know," he said. "But sometimes I get so frustrated! Do you know what the gorilla word for 'moon' is? *Kablooga! You* try to write a poem and see what the hell rhymes with *kablooga!* In a way it's an even sillier language than French."

"Of course, there ain't no law that says you got to associate with them," I pointed out.

"With all their faults, they're still preferable to men," he replied hotly. "They don't cheat at cards or vote for *laissez-faire* capitalism or mix their drinks..."

"I'm just pointing out alternatives," I said.

"I know," he said. "I'm inclined to be emotional these days. I suspect it all goes back to my troubles with Barrow, Phillips, and Smythe."

I was about to make some comforting remark or other when a huge bull gorilla broke cover about two hundred yards away, stared balefully at us for a couple of minutes, and walked off into the bushes.

"That was George," said Bloomstoke. "He's probably trying to let me know tactfully that it's time for a meeting of the Governing Council."

Another gorilla came out of the bushes no more than ten feet away and walked up to me.

"It's just George," explained Bloomstoke calmly. "He's come to see who you are."

"But he was a furlong away just a couple of seconds ago!"

"No, that was a different one," said Bloomstoke.

"You call them both George?" I asked.

"I call them *all* George," he replied. "It helps impart the notion that the state is more important than the individual."

The George that was examining me put his face about two inches

from mine and glared into my eyes with his own little bloodshot ones. His teeth were sort of rotten, and his breath wasn't much better, but as much as I wanted to turn my head away I thought it best not to make any real sudden moves

At last George turned to Bloomstoke and jabbered something. Bloomstoke jabbered back and then turned to me.

"George wants to know if you're a Whig or a Tory," he said.

"I got to admit it ain't a subject over which I've pondered many long and burdensome hours," I answered.

They jabbered back and forth again, and finally George gave me a little snarl and went back off into the jungle.

"I told him you were an anarchist," said Bloomstoke. "It was easier than explaining why you choose not to exercise your franchise."

"Actually, I used to exercise the tar out of it when I was back in the States," I said. "I'd vote early and often for whichever candidate was quick on the draw with a ten-spot or a little pure Kentucky bourbon."

"An interesting notion," remarked Bloomstoke, "and one I may have to introduce very shortly. You see, we've got a sheriff and a marshal and a police force, but the concept of lawbreaking is totally unknown to them, which makes for more waste than usual among our officeholders."

Well, it was all too complicated for me, and I just walked along in silence while Bloomstoke outlined his grandiose plans to me. He must have been running off at the mouth for the better part of an hour when we heard a gunshot off in the distance.

"More territorial aggrandizement!" he muttered, his eyes gleaming. "I'll have to put a stop to this." He turned to me. "How are you at racing through the treeways?"

"You mean swinging on vines like unto a monkey?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Brother Bloomstoke, I got troubles enough just keeping on the trail as it meanders along through the bush, and *that's* with the comforting knowledge that if I slip and fall I'll hit the ground in less than twenty or thirty seconds and probably won't bounce. Maybe you'd best race off ahead of me."

"I'd like to, but I can't leave you alone with the apes," he replied. "They've never seen an anarchist before, and there's no telling what they might do."

And with that, he cupped his hands over his mouth and gave a scream that would have woke such dead as weren't otherwise occupied at the time. I couldn't figure out what was going on until about two minutes later, when a huge elephant thundered up out of the bush, crushing trees right and left and skidding to a halt directly in front of Bloomstoke.

"Goola, my friend," he said, stepping forward and petting the elephant on the trunk while I decided that the whole proceedings made a lot more sense when watched from behind a large tree. "Come on out, Doctor Jones," he called. "Goola will provide us with transportation."

"How do I know that I won't provide old Goola here with a little snack?" I asked, for to my eyes Goola was looking decidedly eleven-o'clockish, an opinion that was strengthened by the loud rumbling noises that his belly was making.

"Goola will do what I tell him to do," said Bloomstoke firmly. "Now come out so that he can see you."

"I don't know about this," I said from behind my tree. "He can't eat what he can't see."

"Elephants are herbivores," said Bloomstoke.

"They're also very nearsighted," I pointed out. "Maybe I look like a fig tree to him."

"If you don't come out instantly, I'll simply leave you behind," he said.

I quickly discussed my options with my Silent Partner, and we decided that being left behind was — very minimally — the less desirable of two admittedly depressing alternatives, so I slowly left the protection of my tree and edged, a step at a time, over toward Goola.

"Let him smell the back of your hand," said Bloomstoke.

I held out my hand and Goola took a good whiff, almost pulling my arm out of the socket in the process.

"Good!" said Bloomstoke vigorously. "Now we're all friends. Goola, lift us up!"

Goola pawed the ground three times with his right front foot.

"No, Goola!" said Bloomstoke. *"Lift!"*

Goola rolled over on his back and closed his eyes

"Idiot!" snapped Bloomstoke. I kept feeling we should throw him a fish or something, but my companion stalked off furiously. "Come on, Jones, we'll walk!"

When we got about a hundred yards away Goola trumpeted six or seven times and stood on his head. Then we took a hard left around a wait-a-bit thorn tree and I couldn't see him anymore, though we could hear him for another ten minutes.

We followed an old rhino trail in the direction of the gunshots, and in about half an hour Bloomstoke held out his arm, practically decapitating me as I walked by him, and when I fell to the ground, gurgling and gasping for air, he put a forefinger to his lips.

"Silence!" he whispered.

Well, I would have told him what I thought of his silence, but I was a little preoccupied with choking to death, so I merely glared at him and quietly urged the Lord to strike him either dead or mute, whichever came first.

I got my breath back and stood up just in time to see Bloomstoke stride out of the bushes into a clearing to confront a kind of smallish white man dressed all in khaki.

"Who are you that invades my jungle?" Bloomstoke demanded.

"I'm Capturing Clyde Calhoun," said the white man, not looking the least bit scared or startled. "And you are either the strongest white man or the puniest gorilla I've ever laid eyes on."

"What is your business here?" said Bloomstoke ominously.

"Business?" laughed Calhoun. "Ain't you never read my books or seen my movies? I'm Capturing Clyde! I go out after the most dangerous animals in the world — except for redheads named Thelma — and bring 'em back alive, and put 'em in my circus or turn 'em over to zoos or gourmet chefs or other interested parties."

"What animals do you seek?"

"Gorillas," said Calhoun. "Thought I'd bring back fifteen or twenty of 'em before they're all extinct."

"I distinctly heard the reports of a powerful gun," said Bloomstoke.

"You bet your boots you did," said Calhoun, holding up a Lee-Enfield .303 military rifle. "Or at least you would if you were wearing any boots."

"I thought you told me that you brought them back alive," said Bloomstoke accusingly.

"Maybe I should reword that a bit," said Calhoun. "Them what I bring back *is* alive. I just take old Betsy here and aim right betwixt their eyes and fire away. Anything still breathing gets captured and civilized."

"Where's your camp?" asked Bloomstoke.

"About eight miles behind me," said Calhoun. "You can't miss it. I've got two hundred porters, a dozen trackers, ten cooks, a couple of translators, and forty-three veterinarians."

I stepped out of the clearing next to Bloomstoke.

"What the hell are you?" demanded Calhoun.

"The Right Reverend Doctor Lucifer Jones, at your service," I said.

"You got any good funeral ceremonies for hippos?" he asked.

"I ain't never tried my hand at one," I admitted.

"Then you'll have to be at someone else's service, Reverend Jones," he said. "I got a little too enthused down by the river this morning."

"You planning on going back to Nairobi anytime in the near future?" I asked him.

"Soon as I pick up my gorillas," he said.

"Mind if I tag along with you?"

"Why not?" he said. "What the hell are you doing out here in the Congo anyway?"

"I've mostly been concentrating on being lost," I said.

"How about you?" he said to Bloomstoke. "You coming back to Nairobi too?"

"This is my jungle," said Bloomstoke, folding his arms across his massive chest. "I will not leave it, and you will not hunt in it."

"Do you know who you're talking to?" roared Calhoun. "I'm Capturing Clyde, by God, and I'll hunt where I want!"

"This jungle belongs to me, and I will not allow you to molest my gorillas," reported Bloomstoke.

"What kind of pervert do you take me for?" said Calhoun. "I don't want to molest them! I want to capture them!"

"No," said Bloomstoke. "Now I want you to leave my jungle."

"Who says it's *your* jungle anyway?" demanded Calhoun.

Bloomstoke reached inside his loincloth and whipped out a pair of folded documents, which he handed to Calhoun.

"Son of a bitch!" exclaimed Calhoun after he had read them. "I didn't know they could sell a jungle."

"Neither did I," said Bloomstoke morosely.

"Who'd you buy it from?" asked Calhoun.

"A man named Van Horst."

"Figgers."

"Why does everyone say that?" asked Bloomstoke.

"I'd tell you, but it brings back too many unpleasant memories," said Calhoun. "I don't suppose you'd consider renting me a little section of your jungle, with maybe an option to buy?"

"I could use the money," admitted Bloomstoke. "But I'd have to present your proposal to the tribe and get their approval, and they're very leery of anything that reeks of capitalism."

"Tribe?" asked Calhoun. "What tribe? I didn't know there were any natives in this region."

"This tribe is a little more native than most," I said.

"No," concluded Bloomstoke, shaking his head sadly. "I'll never get the Ruling Council to buy it."

"Would it help if I told them they could retain the mineral rights?" asked Calhoun.

"I doubt it," said Bloomstoke truthfully.

"All right," said Calhoun. "I've got another proposition. I'm being paid four thousand pounds for every gorilla I capture. If you'll let me hunt in your jungle and give me a helping hand, I'll split the take fifty-fifty with you."

"How many gorillas do you need?" asked Bloomstoke.

"About twenty."

"And I owe Barrow, Phillips, and Smythe thirty-eight thousand pounds," he mused. Then he shook his head again. "No! I just can't! John D. Rockefeller or J.P. Morgan might have understood, but Karl Marx would come back and haunt me."

"And George would eat you," I added.

"What the hell are you guys talking about?" asked Calhoun.

"Let me speak to them about accepting a short-term lease on the jungle," said Bloomstoke, grabbing an overhanging branch and pulling himself up on it. "Maybe I can show them that Fabian socialism doesn't necessarily preclude the validity of certain capitalistic principles." He leaped into the air, caught a low-hanging vine, and was soon racing through the treetops to meet with the tribe.

"Tell me something, Reverend Jones," said Calhoun, leaning against a tree and lighting up a pipe.

"If I can," I said amicably.

"When Americans go crazy they beat up their wives and spend their life savings on booze, which at least keeps their women on their toes and puts a little money back into the economy. And when Irishmen go crackers, they go off and join the IRA and help keep down the population of a very crowded little island." He paused thoughtfully. "So how come whenever Englishmen go nuts they run around naked in tropical climates?"

I allowed as to how I didn't know, but it did seem to be the case, at least in my experience. He pulled out a small metal flask and offered me a swig, and we got to talking about one thing and another, passing the time of day very pleasantly, when suddenly we heard a horrible sound away off in the distance.

"What is it?" asked Calhoun.

"I can't rightly tell," I answered.

"Sounds like a bunch of savage voices screaming in fury," he said, putting his flask away.

A moment later we heard a noise overhead, and saw Bloomstoke dropping down from one branch to another until he finally landed right next to us on the ground.

"Hurry!" he cried. "We've no time to waste!"

"What are you talking about, Brother Bloomstoke?" I asked.

"We've got to get out of here!"

"But what happened?" I persisted.

"They decided that I was a closet imperialist and threw me out of the party! *Me*, who brought them a fourteen-year agricultural recovery plan!"

"What's he talking about, Reverend?" asked Calhoun.

"I think he's saying that his visa's been revoked and he is in some danger of being deported," I said, falling into step behind

Bloomstoke as he lit out for the east. "Or worse yet, detained without right of counsel."

"Are you sure we have to run?" panted Calhoun, joining me.

"I'm sure *I* have to run," I replied. "You do whatever you think is best."

We made it to Calhoun's camp in about three hours. The gorillas lined up in a huge semi-circle just out of rifle range and kept screaming things at us, which Bloomstoke translated as "capitalist swine" and "war-mongering imperialists" and "running dogs". Every now and then one of them would call us "ugly naked apes who didn't have the brains to turn over a rotten log and find a handful of succulent grubworms," at which Bloomstoke would smile and inform us that obviously the entire tribe was not yet radicalized.

By dawn the next morning it was apparent that the gorillas weren't going to come no closer and that Bloomstoke wasn't going to let no one go hunting in his jungle, so Calhoun announced that we would be leaving for Nairobi in an hour or so. Bloomstoke gave out that peculiar scream of his, and a few minutes later old Goola came lumbering out of the jungle.

"Don't shoot him," ordered Bloomstoke, as Calhoun raised his rifle.

"But he'll trample us!" said Calhoun.

"Am I not Master of the Jungle?" said Bloomstoke with a confident smile. He raised his hand and Goola came to a sudden stop.

"He does whatever you tell him to?" asked Calhoun, suddenly interested.

Bloomstoke nodded.

"You ever give any serious thought to appearing in the circus?" continued Calhoun.

"I'd need thirty-eight thousand pounds," said Bloomstoke

"Out of the question!" said Calhoun.

"That would include the elephant."

"Let's see what he can do," said Calhoun, scratching his head.

Bloomstoke walked up to the pachyderm. "Goola — sit!" he commanded.

Goola picked Bloomstoke up with his trunk and deposited the jungle lord on the back of his neck.

"We'll work on that," said Bloomstoke hastily. "Put me down, Goola."

Goola pawed the ground three times with his right front foot, while Calhoun snorted in derision and walked away.

"I could be an aerialist!" Bloomstoke called after him. "I'm really good at swinging from tree to tree."

"I'll think about it," said Calhoun.

"Or a sharpshooter!" continued Bloomstoke. "I'm a crack shot with a bow and arrow. Damn you, Goola — put me the hell down!"

Well, they spent most of the day dickering, but the upshot of it all was that Calhoun already had a flock of aerialists, and besides, it would cost too much to lug a bunch of trees and vines around the countryside and erect them under the big top. Also, people didn't pay top dollar to watch bow-and-arrow marksmen unless they were with a Wild West Show, which was one of the kinds of shows that Calhoun didn't run.

"Tell you what I'll do," said Calhoun at last. "You teach that elephant five tricks by the time we hit Nairobi and I'll pay you thirty-eight thousand pounds to go on tour with my circus for two years."

"And if I don't?" asked Bloomstoke.

"Then I'll buy him outright for ten thousand, and you can hire on as an animal attendant for standard wages."

"Capitalist pig!" muttered Bloomstoke, but he shook on it.

Well, I never saw an elephant not learn so many tricks in my life as I did during the month it took us to get from the Congo to Kenya. Bloomstoke would tell him to stand up, and he'd roll over. Bloomstoke would tell him to lie down, and he'd speak. Bloomstoke would tell him to speak, and he'd count with his foot. When we were two days out of Nairobi it was pretty obvious that Bloomstoke was going to come out on the short end of the deal, so I walked over to him after everyone else was asleep.

"You been going about this all wrong, Brother Bloomstoke," I said, taking him off to where we wouldn't disturb nobody.

"What do you mean, Doctor Jones?" he asked.

"Look, we all agree that old Goola, if he ain't out-and-out retarded, has at least got a serious learning disability, right?" I said.

Bloomstoke nodded.

"But he's also a good-hearted critter who's eager to please, even if he don't know what the hell you're talking about."

"What are you getting at?" asked Bloomstoke.

"Why not give him commands in French or ape or some other foreign tongue?" I suggested. "Then, no matter what he does next, praise him and act like it was just what you had in mind."

"That's immoral," he said sternly.

"Well, personally I find it a lot less immoral than poverty," I said. "But if you disagree, why, that's your right. Just forget I ever suggested it."

The next morning Bloomstoke called Calhoun over and gave Goola a dozen terse commands in apish, and shortly thereafter signed a thirty-eight-thousand-pound contract.

As for me, I left Bloomstoke and Calhoun and their animals behind me and, still loaded down with gemstones, went off to build my tabernacle in the fair city of Nairobi.

*When Elton Elliot decided to resurrect the fabled* Science Fiction Review *from the ashes, he asked me if I'd be willing to write an article for him. One of my deepest regrets was that I had never written for it when Dick Geis was publishing it, and I couldn't let the opportunity pass. And, since* SFR *is nothing if not controversial, I thought I would examine the cultural myopia of some of Kirinyaga's critics.*

# Uh...Guys — My Name Isn't Koriba

LET ME BEGIN WITH an immodest statement: the Kirinyaga stories are pretty good pieces of fiction.

The fans think so. The first one won a Hugo, and the second was nominated for a Hugo.

The pros think so. The first two were Nebula nominees, the third is currently leading the list of recommendations for the 1991 Nebula, and the fourth, though it's only been out for a month (I'm writing this in late August), has already secured a place on the 1991 Nebula Preliminary Ballot.

The publishers think so. They have appeared in the two most prestigious prozines in the field — *F&SF* and *Asimov's;* Tor bought the only novella in the cycle as a lead title for a Tor Double; and a number of publishers have asked for the chance

to bid for them when the stories are finally collected in book form.

The critics...

Well, um, yeah — the critics.

The fact of the matter is that these little fables have driven the critics to distraction. I have been accused of everything from racism to sexism to jingoism to (name the "ism" of your choice here). In fact, about the only thing I *haven't* been accused of is poor writing — so, since we all agree that the Kirinyaga stories are well-constructed and well-written, I think it might be interesting to see just what it is about them that so annoys the critics.

The narrator of all the Kirinyaga stories is a fanatic named Koriba. He is a fictional construct. He is based on many Kikuyu I have met, but none of them are named Resnick. He — and the real-life sources from which he was drawn — deeply believe in the traditional Kikuyu lifestyle. They feel that the intrusion of Western culture has destroyed that lifestyle, and their notion of Utopia is a return to the way things were before the Europeans showed up to bring them the dubious benefits of civilization.

Resnick, on the other hand, believes in air-conditioning, running water, electricity, and microwave ovens. It is important that you keep this in mind as the article progresses. Just keep saying to yourself: Resnick is a writer, and Koriba is his fictional construct. (There. That wasn't so hard, was it?)

(Well, maybe it was, as witness:)

Rebecca Ore, writing to *The New York Review of Science Fiction* (which I am convinced exists solely to keep me from becoming over-confident in my gifts, such as they are), says, "Is Resnick's space-bottled African culture ever sexist!"

Uh...that's not *Resnick's* African culture, gang — and therein lies the crux of it. This isn't Resnick's Africa; it is the Kikuyu's Africa as it existed in 1885, and as it exists today. Women are second-class citizens, no question about it. In fact, there is no word for "woman"

in Swahili; the closest one can come is "*manamouki*", which means "female property", and applies equally to women, cows, sows, bitches, mares, and ewes. Pay attention now: this isn't the way Resnick made it, it's the way he *found* it.

I'm not even sorry that it offends Rebecca. It was supposed to, hell, it offends *me*. But is it valid to criticize the author for representing a society as it exists, rather than as we wish it would exist?

"I'm all for cultural relativism that's not imposed by an elite whose life is going to be much the same whether peasants or electric fixtures hold the lights while they party," concludes Ms. Ore.

Roughly translated, this means: I am all for cultural relativism as long as it is imposed by an elite with whom I find myself in agreement. So are we all — which is one of the reasons that colonialism came into being in the first place.

Now, the driving force behind Koriba's motivation in the first few Kirinyaga stories is to free his people from all Western influence, even if that means they must give up all those things that Resnick holds dear: Monday night football, automatic transmissions, computers, paved roads, blood pressure medication, and so forth. Not a story goes by that Koriba doesn't give numerous examples of exactly how (in his opinion) the Kikuyu culture became corrupted by exposure to Western influence.

Gordon Van Gelder, writing in *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, concludes his excoriation of "Kirinyaga" with the following paragraph:

"Given my penchant for venturing to Africa every ten years, I expect I'll return to Kenya three or four years from now. With luck, I'll be able to spend as much time in the country as I'd like, be able to make new friends and share experiences, and perhaps impress upon some people the ideals in which I believe. Ideals I hadn't realized I still felt strongly about until I read 'Kirinyaga'."

Words to warm a writer's heart: I actually made the man think, and reexamine his beliefs.

On the other hand, I don't seem to have made him think very hard or very rationally. he knows at a gut level that his cherished beliefs are right and the Kikuyu's are wrong, and he's already planning on going to Kenya to give them still further exposure to White American Middle Class Values. Obviously, this is just what they need. (Contributions for Mr. Van Gelder's headstone may be sent to this address. Remember to include postage, as we shall almost certainly have to mail it to Kenya.)

Robert Killheffer, writing in (surprise!) *The New York Review of Science Fiction,* has absolutely no knowledge of things African, so he proceeds to tell his readers why "Kirinyaga" doesn't apply to American Indians. And why shouldn't he? I mean, after all, they're non-white and non-high-tech, so they must be a) identical, and b) in serious need of Western culture, right?

Now, it was after Killheffer's article appeared that I wrote to *The New York Review of Science Fiction* and suggested that since everyone who had thus far attacked the "Kirinyaga" stories seemed woefully ignorant of Third World cultures in general and the Kikuyu culture in particular, I would be happy to supply all future critics with a recommended reading list if they would just take the trouble to request one.

The aforementioned Mr. Van Gelder affixed a postscript to my letter, recommending Marjorie Shostak's *Nisa: The Life and Worlds of a !Kung Woman.* Nothing wrong with that, I suppose — except that the !Kung are hunter-gatherers and the Kikuyu are agricultural; the !Kung live almost 3,000 miles away from the Kikuyu and possess a stone-age culture, while the Kikuyu had worked with iron and had an incredibly complex social structure long before the Europeans arrived; and the !Kung have been hunted to the brink of extinction by their neighboring tribes, whereas the Kikuyu are

the dominant tribe of East Africa. But what the hell — they're all non-white, non-Western, and non-high-tech, so what's the difference?

Now, lest you think this is a grudge match against *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, let me assure you that it isn't. They actually haven't mentioned the Kirinyaga stories for the past six months, and have contented themselves with criticizing the dedication pages to my most recent novels. But that, alas, doesn't mean the ignorance of our own world among science fiction critics has ceased. Heinlein pointed out in "Solution Unsatisfactory" that you can't embargo knowledge; perhaps he should have pointed out that the same holds true for ignorance.

Gardner Dozois, who told me that nothing receives hate mail at *Asimov's* like the accurate depiction of Third World cultures (Hi, Lucius!), has been forwarding it to me quite regularly. Perhaps the most outraged came from a Dr. Anne Rubin, who pointed out that female circumcision *hurts*, and that I was a crude, evil, barbaric man (as well as a sexist pig) for suggesting that it should exist in Kikuyu culture.

Well, the truth of the matter is that I didn't suggest that it *should* exist anywhere in the world. I am guilty only of pointing out that it *does* exist in Kikuyu society, whether Dr. Rubin likes it or not. More to the point, almost 80% of all black African women from *all* African cultures undergo circumcision ceremonies (female circumcision is a euphemism for clitoridectomy, for those of you who haven't figured it out yet). I think what drives Westerners craziest about the situation is that whenever well-meaning missionaries and/or colonial governments have tried to put an end to the practice, it has been the *women*, not the men, who have protested most vehemently and refused to give up their cherished rite of passage to adulthood.

(It might be well to point out here that some 34 years ago, Robert

Ruark wrote a best-selling novel about Kenya. It was about the Mau Mau Emergency, and was entitled *Something of Value*. The title was not picked at random: when you take away a people's culture, you must replace it with something of value, or you've got a big problem on your hands — a fact that seems not only to have eluded the British and the French and the Italians and the Belgians and the Portuguese, but at least some of the people who find fault with the Kirinyaga stories for not toeing the party line, said line being that If We Believe In It, It Must Be Right — And Don't Bother Me With What All Those Illiterate Savages Think.)

Anyway, let's try a different magazine. *Locus* points out in reviewing "For I Have Touched the Sky" and "Bwana": "Koriba's advice now borders perilously close on self-deprecating racism."

Now you know — Koriba's a racist.

Well, not really. What Koriba has pointed out in every story is that the Europeans' culture is not evil in itself — after all, it works just fine for the Europeans — but it is wrong for the Kikuyu. If the Europeans were a) black, or b) polka-dot, would this still be a racist statement, I wonder?

Anyway, the *Locus* commentary goes on to ask: "Is this the best we can do, to return to the primitive? A dismaying thought..."

Yes, it *is* a dismaying thought. It's a dismaying practice, and in the stories more than one character suffers considerably because of it. But it is Koriba's dismaying practice, not Resnick's. Honest. Resnick just sits at his computer and transmutes what he has seen in Africa into science fiction stories.

But this does point out another blind spot among the reviewers and critics. So much science fiction is actually a presentation of the author's impassioned arguments in favor of some point of view, a fictionalized polemic as it were, that no one (always excepting the readers and the writers) seems willing to acknowledge that having a narrator take a position that is totally in opposition to what the

writer believes (and what he hopes the reader believes) is a legitimate literary device.

So perhaps it's time for a lip-reading exercise. Ready? Here goes. Read my lips:

Koriba is wrong. His Utopia won't work. There will be 10 stories in the cycle, and Kirinyaga is already crumbling around the edges in the fourth story. The author doesn't believe in the viability of Koriba's Utopia — but Koriba does, and for the character (who, let us never forget, is a fanatic) to ring true, he must never doubt that it is both possible and viable.

I shudder to think what the critics would make of a story that fairly and truthfully represented Ayatollah Khomeini or Saddam Hussein. (Actually, I know what they'd think. As Gardner Dozois and Barry Malzberg and others have said, make 'em aliens and you can do anything you want with 'em. Just don't tell anyone that they might actually exist as human beings; it makes people uncomfortable. This seems to have held true for my novel *Paradise,* which is nothing but a thinly disguised allegory of Kenya's history — but because my Kikuyu became fur-covered aliens called Bluegills, not a single voice was raised in protest to any of their beliefs or attitudes. Curious, isn't it?)

In reviewing "The Manamouki", *Locus* pointed out that "Today's lesson from Kirinyaga is that people with different ways must be rejected or disharmony will result." This is a difficult concept for Americans to swallow, since we live in a melting-pot — but the history of the world (and not just the Third World) would tend to show that people with different ways must be rejected or disharmony will result.

How different must the ways be? Not very. Idi Amin slaughtered 400,000 of his fellow Ugandans; his successor, Dr. Milton Obote, slaughtered 500,000 more; and *his* successor, General Okello, wiped out another 600,000. How the hell different can one Ugandan

be from another? (The answer, for those critics who have stopped burying their heads in the sand long enough to take a breath, is: different enough.)

In fact, as I sit here writing this (late August, 1990, three days before taking another trip to Africa in search of story material to make the critics twitch), the death total in Soweto has topped 600 for the month. These were not blacks who were killed by whites. These are blacks — Xhosa and Zulu — whose ways were different enough from each other that they temporarily forgot exactly who has been oppressing them lately...so, leaving aside whether he understood what the story was really about, maybe the lesson the *Locus* reviewer received from "The Manamouki" was not totally invalid when applied to the world which he inhabits.

Charles Platt's credentials as a critic are well-known in the field. He and I have entered a long correspondence about the Kirinyaga stories, which will be published in Charles' own fanzine in the next few months, but I'm sure he won't mind my quoting two paragraphs of his here, since they constitute what I believe to be the core of his arguments:

"Personally, I think it is an outrage that science fiction, which has the potential to do great good by stimulating the imagination and encouraging a problem-solving attitude toward the future, is used in such a way that it may encourage the reverse: hobbling the imagination and turning away from problems that seem too difficult to face. This is the mood of the times, among many people scared of technology, and *your stories are encouraging it* [italics his]. You show primitive people on a space colony freely choosing to go back to traditions such as clitoral circumcision, voodoo, and child sacrifice, because the alternative was even worse. To leave it at that, and never even imply a third path might exist, is a disgraceful piece of oversimplification.

"It is also a paternalistic, racist insult to African tribes who have

happily transcended the superstitions and barbarisms of their past. Would they agree with you, that European ways are not their ways, and cannot ever work for them? More likely, they'd be furious with you for writing a story in which they are shown as savages who can never hope to become anything more than savages without fucking up their world."

That second paragraph is so culturally myopic, so offensive to people who live in a complex society that resents the intrusion of our Western values, so typical of the reaction that the Kirinyaga stories have received from a handful of critics, one scarcely knows where to begin.

But probably I should begin by addressing the initial paragraph and pointing out (this is a recorded message) that my name isn't Koriba. *I* don't hold his truths to be self-evident; *he* does. The fact that a third path might exist has of course occurred to Resnick — but Koriba is a fanatic, and precious few fanatics see a plethora of alternatives to what they believe (I also find it difficult to believe that someone finding my story stuck in the middle of a science fiction magazine will forthwith eschew all technology, but let it pass.)

(I suppose I should add, parenthetically, that Koriba has *never* referred to the Kikuyu as "savages" or as "barbarians", nor do he or Resnick believe them to be. That choice of definitions we leave to Caucasian critics.)

As for African tribes who have happily transcended the superstitions and barbarisms of their past, I'm very tempted to say "Name three" — but only because I'm polite: "Name one" is just as tough a question. Certainly we all know that Uganda had just a little bit of trouble adjusting to life as an independent nation...but because these nations are non-white and non-high-tech, we — and our press — tend to overlook the fact that none of the other sub-Saharan nations are doing a hell of a lot better

In the Central African Republic, the self-proclaimed Emperor Bokassa slaughtered literally 70% of his country's population; President Joseph Mobutu has banked all five billion dollars of aid we've sent to Zaire, while at the same time his people have actually deserted the cities and gone back to living in the bush; Hastings Banda, the American-educated President of Malawi, has the best-trained death squads on the continent; the majority Shona tribe of Zimbabwe has been waging an off-and-on war of genocide against the minority Ndebele tribe for more than a decade; Tanganyika and Zanzibar did not become Tanzania until more than a million Arabs had been slaughtered; the death toll in the Mozambique revolution recently passed the three million mark; the first thing the free slaves who settled Liberia did was sell the people they found there into slavery; even the placid, gentle Bushmen of the Kalahari have been hunted to near-extinction by their neighbors in Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

In 1973, no less than four African presidents had indulged in cannibalism; when Julius Nyerere retired as President of Tanzania in 1985, he was only the second president in African history to retire voluntarily (as opposed to dying in office, being killed in office, or being thrown out of office); and 35 sub-Saharan nations are currently listed as human rights violators by Amnesty International, including the two most modern, capitalistic, high-tech, Westernized countries — South Africa and Kenya.

Now, that's an unpleasant catalog, and I have a feeling that a lot of critics such as Charles and those others I've quoted would prefer that we just sweep these facts under the rug, since they conflict with their worldview — but if it is the job of the fiction writer to examine the human condition, he hamstrings himself artistically by starting with false premises, however unpleasant the truth may be

When I set out to write the Kirinyaga stories, I thought that if properly done, they could be powerful and they could move

people — but I never anticipated that they could place so many critics so uncomfortably face-to-face with their own beliefs. These were going to be (and I think *are)* simply little fables, morality plays if you will, told from a point of view that, while existing in the real world, is as alien to us as any character ever created on Mesklin or Barsoom or Arrakis.

I think, in retrospect, that if I'd have made Koriba a native of Mesklin or Barsoom or Arrakis, the series might have come out, pleased some readers, failed to make a single critic uncomfortable, and vanished without a trace.

I'm glad I didn't.

***

(Postscript: the mail just arrived — and I find that a friend, who is probably laughing his head off, has sent me the text of a speech that was given at a recent convention in Chicago The gist of it is that Resnick may *think* he's created a Utopia, but it sure as hell isn't a Utopia for women.)

*sigh*

*After I wrote and sold* Paradise, *a science-fictional allegory of Kenya's history, Beth Meacham, my editor at Tor, asked me to write the following article, which some magazine had requested of her. I have no idea whether it ever appeared, but I thought you might be interested in how I attack those crazy ideas once I get them.*

# Paradise Found...Kind Of

I HAVE OFTEN FELT that science fiction writers — myself occasionally included — look too far afield for their source material. After all, if we actually found a sentient society living on Mars or Alpha Centauri VI, it would very likely be totally incomprehensible to us...so why go to the bother of trying to imagine such a society?

Well, in point of fact, we don't. We write for an audience of late 20th Century human beings, and so our aliens and their societies become metaphors for what we see in our own world.

Which isn't to say that one can't find sufficiently alien societies existing right here and now. After all, not all futures have to be extrapolations of 1989 America or England

Take Kenya, for instance.

Here is an emerging Third World nation which is thoroughly capitalistic, has never been involved in a war against any of its neighbors, is a magnet for Western investment, and has a capital

city (Nairobi) which, with a population of more than 1.5 million, can truly be termed a metropolis.

Now consider the following:

— As recently as 1900, not a single Kenyan tribe had a word for "wheel".

— No Kenyan tribe entered the 20th Century with a written language.

— There is no word in Swahili for "woman". The closest one can come is *manamouki,* a word which means female property, and can be applied equally to wives, sows, mares, and cows.

— Even today, in a country that claims to be 80% Christian, more than 75% of its teenagers of both sexes undergo circumcision rites.

— In a country where the official language is English, less than 10% of the populace can speak it.

— In the less than three decades since Independence, this nation, in which tourism supplies the single greatest amount of desperately-needed hard foreign currency, has watched impotently as poachers have reduced its elephant population from 600,000 to under 15,000, and its rhino population from 75,000 to less than 300.

— Kenya has had only two Presidents. Despite the fact that the average Kenyan earns less than a dollar a day and that both Presidents were worth well over $100,000,000 within ten years of assuming office, both men were virtually worshipped by the electorate.

How much more alien does a society have to be to qualify for treatment in a science fiction novel?

And it *had* to be science fiction. Robert Ruark was barred from returning to Kenya after writing *Something of Value* and *Uhuru,* and Nguge, the greatest Kenyan writer, now lives in exile in Evanston, Illinois. Kenya's leaders have always been sensitive to criticism, and I *like* going to Kenya.

My approach having been decided upon, the trick was finding a way to tell the entire history of a nation, predict the next twenty or thirty years of it, and still come up with a novel that obeyed all the rules of novel-writing, rather than presenting it as a Stapledonian alternate-world tome of history.

I don't like "generation" novels, and I didn't want to write one. Furthermore, the subject matter couldn't adapt to it: whites dominated Kenya's history from 1885 (the day its borders became official) until the mid-1950s, and blacks have dominated it ever since. And since they *never* intermarried in British colonies, whichever family I chose to follow in a "generation" novel would have virtually no effect on 50% of the events I planned to describe.

Still not sure of the best way to attack the novelistic aspects, I began plotting out the world. The parallels would be as exact as I could make them: every Kenyan animal would have its science-fictional counterpart, every major figure in Kenyan history, white and black alike, would have a fictional analog. Even the cities and hotels would have their counterparts. Pretty soon I had the history and topography and ecology worked out, and I *still* didn't have a hook to hang it on.

Until I went back to Kenya again. On this particular occasion, a 20-year-old white Kenyan girl my wife and I were dining with offered the opinion that Kenya, pleasant as it was, was probably a much nicer place to visit just before her birth, when Britain still controlled it and government services were much more efficient and the poverty was, if not less widespread, at least less visible.

Perry Mason, our 52-year-old private guide, who was also at the table, said that no, she was mistaken. He had been in Kenya since 1952, having come there to fight the Mau Mau and stayed on to become a white hunter and then a safari guide, and in his opinion Kenya was probably at its best in the 1940s, the so-called

Golden Age of East African hunting, before all the racial conflict began.

The next night, while speaking to an 80-year-old retired hunter, Ian Hardy, in the Aberdares Mountains, the subject came up again. He had arrived in 1935, and thought Kenya must have been just about perfect a decade earlier, before the great herds were decimated and the farmers began fencing off the land and the hired help started getting its first hazy notions of independence and equality.

But Karen Blixen had left Kenya in 1931, mourning the passing of her beloved country, which she felt must have been pristine and beautiful just before she arrived in 1912.

And, of course, F. C. Selous, Teddy Roosevelt's white hunter, left Kenya in 1910 because they had already ruined the country.

Later in the trip, I spoke to a couple of black Africans, one a student and one a minor political office-holder. Both were sure that Kenya, although it certainly had its problems, was well on the road to becoming a Utopia.

And finally I had my philosophic hook — the vision of a receding or forthcoming Golden Age that in truth never was and never will be.

This in turn implied a structure for the book. The narrator would begin as a student writing his thesis about the slaughter of this planet's science-fictional analog of Kenya's elephants, which would allow an old hunter to tell his colorful tales.

But as he listens to the old man, and the hunter's attitudes toward the native population become clear, the narrator becomes more interested in the planet than in the elephants, and hunts up some colonial survivors of the "Mau Mau" equivalent — and we get *their* stories and viewpoints.

His subsequent book about the uprising gains him a measure of fame, and he is hired by the first President of this world (a Jomo

Kenyatta analog, of course) to write his biography — which requires him to see the planet in person and analyze both the benefits and disadvantages of independence for a race that is, to borrow a phrase, one generation out of the bush.

This in turn leads to a follow-up assignment, some twenty years later, to see how the planet is faring under a new leader.

The parallels were explicit, the conclusions fair, the form properly novelistic. All I needed now was a name for the planet and a title for the book.

And then I took another trip to Kenya, and spent a couple of days on Lamu Island at the Peponi Hotel. I thought from the name that the owner was probably Italian, but Perry Mason explained that Peponi means "Paradise" in Swahili.

And suddenly I had a name for the world — Peponi — and for the novel: *Paradise: A Chronicle of a Distant World.*

After that, the novel virtually wrote itself, and my only job was to correct the spelling.

*When I first proposed this book to the Boskone committee, they were less than wildly enthusiastic, since it so closely resembled* Through Darkest Resnick With Gun and Camera, *the collection of African writings I had put together for Disclave a year earlier. Rick Katze kept saying, "How can we make this book unique? What can we do that the other book didn't do, huh, Mike, huh?" Eventually I caught on and said that maybe a brand-new, never-before-published Kirinyaga story might do the trick. Rick agreed, and after he finished spreading a path of rose petals to my computer, I sat down and wrote it.*

# Song of a Dry River

I WILL TELL YOU why Ngai is the most cunning and powerful god of all.

Eons ago, when the Europeans were evil and their god decided to punish them, he caused it to rain for forty days and forty nights and covered the earth with water — and because of this, the Europeans think that their god is more powerful than Ngai, who sits on His golden throne atop Kirinyaga, which men now call Mount Kenya.

Certainly it is no small accomplishment to cover the earth with water — but when the Kikuyu heard the story of Noah from the European missionaries, it did nothing to convince us that the god of the Europeans is more powerful than Ngai.

Ngai knows that water is the source of all life, and so when He wishes to punish us, He does not cover our lands with it. Instead He inhales deeply, and sucks the moisture from the air and the soil. Our

rivers dry up, our crops fail, and our cattle and goats die of thirst.

The god of the Europeans may have created the flood — but it was Ngai who created the drought.

Can there be any doubt why He is the god that we fear and worship?

* * *

We emigrated from Kenya to the terraformed world of Kirinyaga to create a Kikuyu Utopia, a society that mirrored the simple, pastoral life we led before our culture was corrupted by the coming of the Europeans — and for the most part we have been successful.

Still, there are times when things seem to be coming apart, and it takes everything I can do in my capacity as the *mundumugu* — the witch doctor — to keep Kirinyaga functioning as it was meant to function.

On the morning of the day that I brought the curse down upon my people, my youthful assistant, Ndemi, had overslept again and once more forgot to feed my chickens. Then I had to make the long trek to a neighboring village, where in direct contradiction of my orders they had begun planting maize in an overused field which I had decreed must lay fallow until after the long rains. I explained once more that the land needed time to rest and regain its strength, but as I left I had the distinct feeling that I would be back again the next week or the next month, giving them the same lecture.

On the way home, I had to settle a dispute between Ngona, who had diverted a small stream to irrigate his fields, and Kamaki, who claimed that his crops were suffering because the stream no longer carried enough water to them. This was the eleventh time someone had tried to divert the stream, and the eleventh time I had angrily explained that the water belonged to the entire village.

Then Sabella, who was to pay me two fat, healthy goats for

presiding at his son's wedding, delivered two animals that were so underfed and scrawny that they didn't even look like goats. Ordinarily I might not have lost my temper, but I was tired of people keeping their best animals and trying to pay me with cattle and goats that looked half-dead, so I threatened to annul the marriage unless he replaced them.

Finally, Ndemi's mother told me that he was spending too much time studying to be a *mundumugu*, and that she needed him to tend his family's cattle, this in spite of the fact that he has three strong, healthy brothers.

A number of the women stared at me in amusement as I walked through the village, as if they knew some secret of which I was ignorant, and by the time I reached the long, winding path that led to the hill where I lived, I was annoyed with *all* of my people. I craved only the solitude of my *boma*, and a gourd of *pombe* to wash away the dust of the day.

When I heard the sound of a human voice singing on my hill, I assumed that it was Ndemi, carrying out his afternoon chores. But as I approached more closely, I realized that the voice was that of a woman.

I shaded my eyes from the sun and peered ahead, and there, halfway up my hill, a wrinkled old woman was busily erecting a hut beneath an acacia tree, weaving the twigs and branches together to form the walls, and singing to herself. I blinked in surprise, for it is well known that no one else may live on the *mundumugu*'s hill.

The woman saw me and smiled. "*Jambo*, Koriba," she greeted me as if nothing was amiss. "Is it not a beautiful day?"

I saw now that she was Mumbi, the mother of Koinnage, who was the paramount chief of the village.

"What are you doing here?" I demanded as I approached her.

"As you see, I am building a hut," she said. "We are going to be neighbors, Koriba."

I shook my head. "I require no neighbors," I said, pulling my blanket more tightly around my shoulders. "And you already have a hut on Koinnage's *shamba.*"

"I no longer wish to live there," said Mumbi.

"You may not live on my hill," I said. "The *mundumugu* lives alone."

"I have faced the doorway to the east," she said, turning to the broad, sprawling savannah beyond the river and ignoring my statement. "That way the rays of the sun will bring warmth into it in the morning."

"This is not even a true Kikuyu hut," I continued angrily. "A strong wind will blow it over, and it will protect you from neither the cold nor the hyenas."

"It will protect me from the sun and the rain," she responded. "Next week, when I have more strength, I will fill in the walls with mud."

"Next week you will be living with Koinnage, where you belong," I said.

"I will not," she said adamantly. "Before I would return to Koinnage's *shamba,* I would rather you left my withered old body out for the hyenas."

*That can be arranged,* I thought irritably, for I had seen enough foolishness for one day. But aloud I said: "Why do you feel this way, Mumbi? Does Koinnage no longer treat you with respect?"

"He treats me with respect," she admitted, trying to straighten her ancient body and placing a gnarled hand to the small of her back.

"Koinnage has three wives," I continued, slapping futilely at a pair of flies that circled my face. "If any of them have ignored you or treated you with disrespect, I will speak to them."

She snorted contemptuously "Ha!"

I paused and stared at a small herd of impala grazing on the

savannah, trying to decide upon the best way to approach the subject. "Have you fought with them?"

"I did not realize that the mornings were so cold on this hill," she said, rubbing her wrinkled chin with a gnarled hand. "I will need more blankets."

"You did not answer my question," I said.

"And firewood," she continued. "I will have to gather much firewood."

"I have heard enough," I said firmly. "You must return to your home, Mumbi."

"I will not!" she said, laying a protective hand on the walls of her hut. "*This* will be my home."

"This is the *mundumugu's* hill. I will not permit you to live here."

"I am tired of people telling me what I am not permitted to do," she said. Suddenly she pointed to a fish eagle that was lazily riding the thermals over the river. "Why should I not be as free as that bird? I will live here on this hill."

"Who else has told you what you cannot do?" I asked.

"It is not important."

"It must be important," I said, "or you would not be here."

She stared at me for a moment, then shrugged. "Wambu has said I may not help her cook the meals, and Kibo no longer lets me grind the maize or brew the *pombe.*" She glared at me defiantly. "I am the mother of the paramount chief of the village! I will not be treated like a helpless baby."

"They are treating you as a respected elder," I explained. "You no longer have to work. You have raised your family, and now you have reached the point where they will care for you."

"I do not *want* to be cared for!" she snapped. "All my life I have run my *shamba,* and I have run it well. I am not ready to stop."

"Did not your own mother stop when her husband died and she

moved onto her son's *shamba?"* I asked, slapping at my cheek as one of the flies finally settled on it.

"My mother no longer had the strength to run her *shamba,"* said Mumbi defensively. "That is not the case with me."

"If you do not step aside, how are Koinnage's wives ever to learn to run his *shamba?"*

"I will teach them," replied Mumbi. "They still have much to learn. Wambu does not cook the banana mash as good as I do, and as for Kibo, well.. " She shrugged her shoulders, to indicate that Koinnage's youngest wife was beyond redemption

"But Wambu is the mother of three sons and is soon to become a grandmother herself," I noted. "If she is not ready to run her husband's *shamba* by now, then she never will be "

A satisfied smile crossed Mumbi's leathery face. "So you agree with me."

"You misunderstand me," I said. "There comes a time when the old must make way for the young."

"*You* have not made way for anyone," she said accusingly.

"I am the *mundumugu,"* I answered. "It is not my physical strength that I offer to the village, but my wisdom, and wisdom is the province of age."

"And I offer *my* wisdom to my son's wives," she said stubbornly.

"It is not the same thing," I said.

"It is precisely the same thing," she replied. "When we still lived in Kenya, I fought for Kirinyaga's charter as fiercely as you yourself did, Koriba. I came here in the same spaceship that brought you, and I helped clear the land and plant the fields. It is not fair that I should be cast aside now, just because I am old."

"You are not being cast aside," I explained patiently. "You came here to live the traditional life of the Kikuyu, and it is our tradition to care for our elders. You shall never want for food, or for a roof over your head, or for care when you are sick."

"But I don't *feel* like an elder!" she protested. She pointed to her loom and her pots, which she had brought up the hill from the village. "I can still weave cloth and repair thatch and cook meals. I am not too old to grind the maize and carry the water calabashes. If I am no longer permitted to do these things for my family, than I shall live here on this hill and do them for myself."

"That is unacceptable," I said. "You must return to your home."

"It is not *mine* any more," she replied bitterly. "It is Wambu's."

I looked down at her stooped, wrinkled body. "It is the order of things that the old shall make way for the young," I said once again.

"Who will *you* make way for?" she asked bitterly.

"I am training young Ndemi to become the next *mundumugu,*" I said. "When he is ready, I shall step aside."

"Who will decide when he is ready?"

"I will."

"Then *I* should decide when Wambu is ready to run my son's *shamba.*"

"What you should do is listen to your *mundumugu,*" I said. "Your shoulders are stooped and your back is bent from the burden of your years. The time has come to let your son's wives care for you."

Her jaw jutted out pugnaciously. "I will not let Wambu cook for me. I have always cooked for myself, ever since we lived beside the dry river in Kenya." She paused again. "I was very happy then," she added bitterly.

"Perhaps you must learn how to be happy again," I answered. "You have earned the right to rest, and to let others work for you This should make you happy."

"But it doesn't."

"That is because you have lost sight of our purpose," I said. "We left Kenya and came to Kirinyaga because we wished to retain our customs and traditions. If I permit you to ignore them, then I must

let everyone ignore them, and then we will no longer be a Kikuyu Utopia, but merely a second Kenya."

"You told us that in a Utopia, everyone is happy," she said. "Well, *I* am not happy, so something must be wrong with Kirinyaga."

"And running Koinnage's *shamba* will make it right?" I asked.

"Yes."

"But then Wambu and Kibo will be unhappy."

"Then perhaps there are no Utopias, and we must each be concerned with our own happiness," said Mumbi.

*Why are old people so selfish and unfeeling?* I wondered. *Here I am, hot and thirsty and tired, and all she can do is complain about how unhappy she is.*

"Come with me," I said. "We will go to the village together, and we will find a solution to your problem. You may not remain here."

She stared at me for a very long moment, then shrugged. "I will come with you, but we will not find a solution, and then I will return here to my new home."

The sun was low in the sky as we climbed down the hill and began walking along the winding path, and twilight had fallen by the time we reached the village and began walking by the various huts. A number of men and women had gathered at Koinnage's *shamba,* and most of them displayed the same amused expressions I had seen earlier in the day. As I approached Koinnage's *boma,* they followed me, eager to see what punishment I would mete out to Mumbi, as if her transgression and my anger were the highlight of their evening's entertainment.

"Koinnage!" I said in a loud, firm voice.

There was no response, and I called his name twice more before he finally emerged from his hut, a sheepish expression on his face.

"*Jambo,* Koriba," he said uneasily. "I did not know you were here."

I glared at him. "Did you also not know your mother was here?"

"This is her *shamba:* where else would she be?" he asked innocently.

"You know very well where she was," I said, as the light of the evening fires cast flickering shadows on his face. "I advise you to think very carefully of the consequences before you lie to your *mundumugu* again."

He seemed to shrink into himself for a moment. Then he noticed all the villagers behind me.

"What are *they* doing here?" he demanded. "Return to your *bomas,* all of you!"

They backed away a few steps, but did not leave.

Koinnage turned to Mumbi. "See how you shame me in front of my people? Why do you do this to me? Am I not the paramount chief?"

"I would think that the paramount chief could control his mother," I said sarcastically.

"I have tried," said Koinnage. "I do not know what has gotten into her." He glared at Mumbi. "I order you once again to return to your hut."

"No," said Mumbi.

"But I am the chief!" he insisted, half furiously, half whining. "You must obey me."

Mumbi stared defiantly at him. "No," she said again.

He turned back to me. "You see how it is," he said helplessly. "*You* are the *mundumugu; you* must order her to stay here."

"No one tells the *mundumugu* what he *must* do," I said severely, for I already knew what Mumbi's response to my order would be. "Summon your wives."

He seemed relieved to be sent away, however briefly, and he went off to the cooking hut, returning a moment later with Wambu, Shumi, and Kibo.

"You all know that a problem exists," I said. "Mumbi is so

unhappy that she wishes to leave your *shamba* and live on my hill."

"It is a good idea," said Kibo. "It is too crowded here."

"It is a bad idea," I replied firmly. "She must live with her family."

"No one is stopping her," said Kibo petulantly.

"She wants to take a more active part in the daily life of the *shamba,*" I continued. "Surely there is something she can do, so that the harmony of your *shamba* is preserved."

For a long moment no one spoke. Then Wambu, who is Koinnage's senior wife, stepped forward.

"I am sorry you are so unhappy, my mother," she said. "You may of course brew the *pombe* and weave the cloth."

"Those are *my* jobs!" protested Kibo.

"We must show respect for our husband's mother," said Wambu with smug smile.

"Why do we not show her even more respect and let her supervise the cooking?" said Kibo.

"I am Koinnage's senior wife," said Wambu firmly. "*I* do the cooking."

"And *I* brew the *pombe* and weave the cloth," said Kibo stubbornly.

"And *I* pound the grain and fetch the water," added Shumi. "You must find something else for her to do."

Mumbi turned to me. "I told you that it wouldn't work, Koriba," she said. "I will gather the rest of my possessions and move into my new home."

"You will not," I said. "You will remain with your family, as mothers have always remained with their families."

"I am not ready to be cast aside as my grandchildren cast aside their toys," she replied.

"And *I* am not ready to allow you to break with the traditions of the Kikuyu," I said sternly. "You will stay here."

"I will not!" she replied, and I heard some of the villagers

chuckling at this withered old lady who defied both her chief and her *mundumugu.*

"Koinnage," I said, directing him and his family inside the thorn fence of his *boma,* so that we might be further away from the onlookers, "she is your mother. Speak to her and convince her to remain here, before she forces me to take some action that you will all regret."

"Do not continue to shame me in the eyes of the village, my mother," pleaded Koinnage. "You must remain in my *shamba."*

"I will not."

"You will!" said Koinnage heatedly, as the men and women of the village crowded closer to the *boma's* entrance.

"And if I don't, what will you do to me?" she demanded, glaring at him. "Will you bind my hands and feet and force me to remain here in my hut?"

"I am the paramount chief," said Koinnage in obvious frustration. "I order you to stay here!"

"Hah!" she said, and now the people's chuckles became outright laughter. "You may be a chief, but you are still my son, and mothers do not take orders from their sons."

"But everyone must obey the *mundumugu,"* he said, "and Koriba has ordered you to remain here."

"*I* will not obey him," she said. "I came to Kirinyaga to be happy, and I am unhappy in your *shamba.* I am going to live on the hill, and neither you nor Koriba will stop me."

Suddenly the laughter stopped, and was replaced by an awed silence, for no one may flout the *mundumugu's* authority in such a manner. Under other circumstances I might have forgiven her, for she was very upset, but she had challenged me in front of the entire village, and it was the end of a long, irritating day.

My anger must have been reflected on my face, for Koinnage suddenly stepped between his mother and myself

"Please, Koriba," he said, his voice unsteady. "She is an old woman, and she does not know what she is saying."

"I know what I am saying," said Mumbi. She glared at me defiantly. "If I cannot live as I like, then I prefer not to live at all. What will you do to me, *mundumugu?*"

"I?" I said innocently, aware of the many eyes that were focused upon me. "I will do nothing to you. As you yourself have pointed out, I am merely an old man." I paused and stared at her, as Koinnage and his wives shrank back in fear. "You speak fondly of the dry river we lived beside when we were children — but you have forgotten what it was like to live beside it. I will help you to remember." I raised my voice, so that all could hear. "Because you have chosen to ignore our tradition, and because the others have laughed, tonight I shall sacrifice a goat and ask Ngai to visit Kirinyaga with a drought such as it has never seen before, until the world is as dry and withered as you are yourself, Mumbi. I shall ask Him not to allow a single drop of rain to fall until you return to your *shamba* and agree to remain there."

"No!" said Koinnage.

"The cattle's tongues will swell in their heads until they cannot breathe, the crops will turn to dust, and the river will run dry." I looked angrily at the faces of my people, as if daring them to laugh again, but none of them had the courage to meet my gaze.

None but Mumbi, that is. She stared thoughtfully at me, and for a moment I thought she was going to retract her statement and agree to remain with Koinnage. Then she shrugged. "I have lived by a dry river before. I can do so again." She began walking away. "I am going to my hill now."

There was a stunned silence.

"Must you do this thing, Koriba?" asked Koinnage at last.

"You heard what your mother said to me, and yet you ask me that?" I demanded.

"But she is just an old woman."

"Do you think that only warriors can bring destruction upon us?" I responded.

"How can living on a hill destroy us?" asked Kibo.

"We are a society of laws and rules and traditions, and our survival as a people depends upon all of them being equally obeyed."

"Then you will really ask Ngai to bring a drought to Kirinyaga?" she said.

"I am tired of being doubted and contradicted by my people, who have all forgotten who we are and why we have come here," I replied irritably. "I have said I would ask Ngai to visit Kirinyaga with a drought, and I will." I spat on my hands to show my sincerity.

"How long will the drought last?"

"Until Mumbi leaves my hill and returns to her own hut on her own *shamba.*"

"She is a very stubborn old woman," said Koinnage miserably. "She could stay there forever."

"That is her choice," I answered.

"Perhaps Ngai will not listen to your supplication," said Kibo hopefully.

"He will listen," I replied harshly. "Am I not the *mundumugu?*"

* * *

When I awoke the next morning, Ndemi had already built my fire and fed my chickens. I emerged from my hut into the cold morning air, my blanket wrapped around my shoulders.

"*Jambo,* Koriba," said Ndemi.

"*Jambo,* Ndemi," I answered.

"Why has Mumbi built a hut on your hill, Koriba?" he asked.

"Because she is a stubborn old woman," I replied.

"You do not wish her to live here?"

"No."

Suddenly he grinned.

"What do you find so amusing, Ndemi?" I asked.

"She is a stubborn old woman and you are a stubborn old man," said Ndemi. "This will be very interesting."

I stared at him, but made no answer. Finally I walked into my hut and activated my computer.

"Computer," I said, "calculate an orbital change that will bring a drought to Kirinyaga."

"Working...done," replied the computer.

"Now transmit those changes to Maintenance and request that they enact them immediately."

"Working...done." There was a moment's silence. "There is a voice-and-image message incoming from Maintenance."

"Put it through," I said.

The image of a middle-aged Oriental woman appeared on the computer's holographic screen.

"Koriba, I just received your instructions," she said. "Are you aware that such an orbital diversion will almost certainly bring a severe climatic change to Kirinyaga?"

"I am."

She frowned. "Perhaps I should word that more strongly. It will bring a *cataclysmic* change. This will precipitate a drought of major proportions."

"Have I the right to request such an orbital change or not?" I demanded.

"Yes," she answered. "According to your charter, you have the right. But..."

"Then please do as I ask."

"You're sure you don't want to reconsider?"

"I am sure."

She shrugged. "You're the boss."

*I am glad that someone remembers that,* I thought bitterly as the connection was broken and the computer screen went blank

* * *

"She talks too much, and I don't like the song she sings, but she has always seemed like a nice woman," remarked Ndemi, staring down the hill at Mumbi's hut after I had finished instructing him in the blessing of the scarecrows. "Why did Koinnage make her leave his *shamba?"*

"Koinnage did not make her leave," I answered. "She chose to leave."

Ndemi frowned, for such behavior was beyond his experience. "What reason did she have for leaving?"

"Her reason is not important," I said. "What *is* important is that the Kikuyu live as families, and she refuses to do so."

"Is she crazy?" asked Ndemi.

"No. Just stubborn."

"If she is not crazy, then she must think she has a good reason for living on your hill," he persisted. "What is it?"

"She still wants to do the work she has always done," I replied. "It is not crazy. In fact, in a way it is admirable — but in this society it is wrong."

"She is very foolish," said Ndemi. "When I am *mundumugu,* I will do no more work than you do."

*Has everyone on Kirinyaga conspired to try my patience?* I wondered. Aloud I said: "I work very hard."

"You work at your magic, and you call down the rains, and you bless the fields and the cattle," conceded Ndemi. "But you never

carry water, or feed your animals, or clean your hut, or tend your gardens."

"The *mundumugu* does not do such things."

"That is why she is foolish. She could live like a *mundumugu* and have all these things done for her, and yet she chooses not to."

I shook my head. "She is foolish because she gave up everything she had to come to Kirinyaga and live the traditional life of the Kikuyu, and now she has broken with those traditions."

"You will have to punish her," said Ndemi thoughtfully.

"Yes."

"I hope the punishment is not a painful one," he continued, "for she is very much like you, and I do not think being punished will make her change her ways."

I looked down the hill at the old woman's hut and wondered if he was right.

* * *

Within a month Kirinyaga was feeling the effects of the drought. The days were long and hot and dry, and the river that ran through our village was very low.

Each morning I awoke to the sound of Mumbi singing to herself as she climbed the hill after filling her water gourd. Each afternoon I threw stones at her goats and chickens as they grazed closer and closer to my *boma*, and wondered how much longer it would be before she returned to her *shamba*. Each evening I received a message from Maintenance, asking if I wanted to make an orbital adjustment that would bring rain to my world.

From time to time Koinnage would trudge up the long, dusty path from the village and speak to Mumbi. I never eavesdropped, so I did not know the details of what they said to each other, but always it would end the same way: with Koinnage losing his temper and

yelling at his mother, and with the old woman glaring at him obstinately as he walked back to the village, yelling imprecations over his shoulder.

One afternoon Shima, Ndemi's mother, came to my *boma.*

"*Jambo,* Shima," I greeted her.

"*Jambo,* Koriba," she said.

I waited patiently for her to tell me the purpose of her visit.

"Has Ndemi been a good assistant to you, Koriba?" she asked.

"Yes."

"And he learns his lessons well?"

"Very well."

"You have never questioned his loyalty?"

"I have never had cause to," I replied

"Then why do you make his family suffer?" she asked. "Our cattle are weak, and our crops are dying. Why do you not bring the drought only to Koinnage's fields?"

"The drought will stop when Mumbi returns to her *shamba,*" I said firmly. "She is the one who will decide when it ends, not I. Perhaps you should speak to her."

"I did," said Shima.

"And?"

"*She* told me to speak to *you.*"

"She brought the drought to Kirinyaga," I said. "She can end it whenever she wishes."

"She is not the *mundumugu.* You are."

"I have acted to preserve our Utopia."

She smiled bitterly. "You have spent too long on your hill, *mundumugu,*" she said. "Come down to the village. Look at the animals and the crops and the children, and then tell me how you are preserving our Utopia."

She turned and walked back down the hill before I could think of an answer.

* * *

Six weeks after the drought commenced, the Council of Elders came to my *boma* as I was giving Ndemi his daily instruction.

*"Jambo,"* I greeted them. "I trust you are well?"

"We are not well, Koriba," said old Siboki, who seemed to be their spokesman.

"I am sorry to hear that," I said sincerely.

"We must talk, Koriba," continued Siboki.

"As you wish."

"We know that Mumbi is wrong," he began. "Once a woman has raised her children and seen her husband die, she must live with her son's family on his *shamba,* and allow them to care for her. It is the law, and it is foolish for her to want to live anywhere else."

"I agree," I said.

"We *all* agree," he said. "And if you must punish her to make her obey our laws, then so be it." He paused. "But you are punishing everyone, when only Mumbi has broken the law. It is not fair that we should suffer for her transgression."

"I wish things could be otherwise," I said sincerely.

"Then can you not intercede with Ngai on our behalf?" he persisted.

"I doubt that He will listen," I said. "It would be better if you spoke to Mumbi and convinced her to return to her *shamba."*

"We have tried," said Siboki.

"Then you must try again."

"We will," he said without much hope. "But will you at least *ask* Ngai to end the drought? You are the *mundumugu;* surely He will listen to you."

"I will ask Him," I said. "But Ngai is a harsh god. He brought forth the drought because Mumbi broke the law; He almost

certainly will not bring the rains until she is ready to once again obey the law."

"But you will ask?"

"I will ask," I answered him.

They had nothing further to say, and after an awkward silence they left. Ndemi approached me when they were too far away to hear him.

"Ngai did not call forth the drought," he said. "You did, by speaking to the box in your hut."

I stared at him without replying

"And if you brought the drought," he continued, "then surely you can end it."

"Yes, I can."

"Then why do you not do so, since it has brought suffering to many people, and not just to Mumbi?"

"Listen to me carefully, Ndemi," I said, "and remember my words, for someday you shall be the *mundumugu*, and this is your most important lesson."

"I am listening," he said, squatting down and staring at me intently.

"Of all the things on Kirinyaga, of all our laws and traditions and customs, the most important is this: the *mundumugu* is the most powerful man in our society. Not because of his physical strength, for as you see I am a wrinkled old man, but because he is the interpreter of our culture. It is he who determines what is right and what is wrong, and his authority must never be questioned."

"Are you saying that I cannot ask why you will not bring the rains," asked Ndemi, confused.

"No," I said. "I am saying that the *mundumugu* is the rock upon which the Kikuyu build their culture, and because of that, he can never show weakness." I paused. "I wish I had not threatened to bring forth the drought. It had been a long, irritating day, and I was

tired, and many people had been very foolish that day — but I *did* promise that there would be a drought, and now, if I show weakness, if I bring the rains, then sooner or later everyone in the village will challenge the *mundumugu*'s authority...and without authority, there is no structure to our lives." I looked into his eyes. "Do you understand what I am saying to you, Ndemi?"

"I think so," he said uncertainly.

"Someday it will be you, rather than I, who speaks to the computer. You must fully understand me before that day arrives."

* * *

There came a morning, three months into the drought, that Ndemi entered my hut and woke me by touching my shoulder.

"What is it?" I asked, sitting up.

"I cannot fill your gourds with water today," said Ndemi. "The river has dried up."

"Then we will dig a well at the foot of the hill," I said, walking out into my *boma* and wrapping my blanket around my shoulders to protect me from the dry, cold morning air.

Mumbi was singing to herself, as usual, as she lit a fire in front of her hut. I stared at her for a moment, then turned back to Ndemi.

"Soon she will leave," I said confidently.

"Will *you* leave?" he responded.

I shook my head. "This is my home."

"This is her home, too," said Ndemi

"Her home is with Koinnage," I said irritably.

"She doesn't think so."

"She must have water to live. She will have to return to her *shamba* soon."

"Maybe," said Ndemi without much conviction.

"Why should you think otherwise?"

"Because I passed her well as I climbed the hill," he answered. He glanced down at Mumbi, who was now cooking her morning meal. "She is a very stubborn old woman," he added with more than a touch of admiration.

I made no answer.

* * *

"Your shade tree is dying, Koriba."

I looked up and saw Mumbi standing beside my *boma*.

"If you do not water it soon, it will wither, and you will be very uncomfortable." She paused. "I have extra thatch from my roof. You may have it and spread it across the branches of your acacia, if you wish."

"Why do you offer me this, when you yourself are responsible for the drought?" I asked suspiciously.

"To show you that I am your neighbor and not your enemy," she replied.

"You disobeyed the law," I said. "That makes you the enemy of our culture."

"It is an evil law," she replied. "For more than four months I have lived here on this hill. Every day I have gathered firewood, and I have woven two new blankets, and I have cooked my meals, and I fetched the water before the river ran dry, and now I bring water from my well Why should I be cast aside when I can do all these things?"

"You are not being cast aside, Mumbi," I said. "It is precisely because you have done these things for so many years that you are finally allowed to rest and let others do them."

"But they are all I have," she protested. "What is the use of being alive if I cannot do the things that I know how to do?"

"The old have always been cared for by their families, as have the weak and the sick," I said. "It is our custom."

"It is a good custom," she said. "But I do not feel old." She paused. "Do you know the only time in my life I felt old? It was when I was not allowed to do anything in my own *shamba.*" She frowned. "It was not a good feeling."

"You must come to terms with your age, Mumbi," I said.

"I did that when I moved to this hill," she replied. "Now *you* must come to terms with your drought."

* * *

The news began to reach my ears during the fourth month.

Njoro had slain his cattle, and was now keeping gerunuk, which do not drink water but lick the dew off the leaves, this in spite of the fact that according to our tradition, the Kikuyu do not raise or eat wild game.

Kambela and Njogu had taken their families and emigrated back to Kenya.

Kubandu, who lived in a neighboring village, had been found hoarding water that he had gathered before the river ran dry, and his neighbors burned his hut and killed his cattle.

A brush fire had broken out in the western plains, and had destroyed eleven *shambas* before it had been stopped.

Koinnage's visits to his mother became more frequent, more noisy, and more fruitless.

Even Ndemi, who previously had agreed that the *mundumugu* could, by definition, do no wrong, again began to question the need for the drought.

"Someday you will be the *mundumugu,*" I said. "Remember all that I have taught you." I paused. "Now, if you should be confronted with the same situation, what would *you* do?"

He was silent for a moment. "I would probably let her live on the hill."

"That is contrary to our tradition."

"Perhaps," he said. "But she is living on the hill *now,* and all the Kikuyu who are not living on the hill are suffering." He paused thoughtfully. "Perhaps it is time to discard some traditions, rather than punish the whole world because one old woman chooses to ignore them."

*"No!"* I said heatedly. "When we lived in Kenya and the Europeans came, they convinced us to discard a tradition. And when we found out how easy it was, we discarded another, and then another, and eventually we discarded so many that we were no longer Kikuyu, but merely black Europeans." I paused and lowered my voice. "That is why we came to Kirinyaga, Ndemi — so that we could become Kikuyu once again. Have you listened to nothing I have said to you during the past two months?"

"I have listened," replied Ndemi. "I just do not understand how living on this hill makes her less of a Kikuyu."

"You had no trouble understanding it two months ago."

"My family was not starving two months ago."

"One has nothing to do with the other," I said. "She broke the law; she must be punished."

Ndemi paused. "I have been thinking about that."

"And?"

"Are there not degrees of lawbreaking?" said Ndemi. "Surely what she did is not the same as murdering a neighbor. And if there are degrees of lawbreaking, then should there not also be degrees of punishment?"

"I will explain it once again, Ndemi," I said, "for the day will come that you take my place as the *mundumugu,* and when that day comes, your authority must be absolute. And that means that the

punishment for anyone who refuses to recognize your authority must also be absolute."

He stared at me for a long moment. "This is wrong," he said at last.

"What is?"

"You have not called down the drought because she has broken the law," he answered. "You have brought this suffering to Kirinyaga because she disobeyed *you.*"

"They are one and the same thing," I said.

He sighed deeply, and furrowed his youthful brow in thought. "I am not sure of that."

That was when I knew that he would not be ready to be the *mundumugu* for a long, long time.

* * *

On the day that the drought was five months old, Koinnage made another trip to the hill, and this time there was no yelling. He stayed and spoke to Mumbi for perhaps five minutes, and then, without even looking toward me, he walked back to the village

And twenty minutes later, Mumbi climbed up to the top of the hill and stood before the gate to my *boma.*

"I am returning to Koinnage's *shamba,*" she announced.

An enormous surge of relief swept over me. "I knew that sooner or later you would see that you were wrong," I said.

"I am not returning because *I* am wrong," she said, "but because *you* are, and I cannot allow more harm to come to Kirinyaga because of it." She paused. "Kibo's milk has gone dry, and her baby is dying. My grandchildren have almost nothing left to eat." She glared at me. "You had better bring the rains today, old man "

"I will ask Ngai to bring the rains as soon as you have returned to your home," I promised her.

"You had better do more than *ask* Him," she said. "You had better *order* Him."

"That is blasphemy."

"How will you punish me for my blasphemy?" she said. "Will you bring forth a flood and destroy even more of our world?"

"I have destroyed nothing," I said. "It was you who broke the law."

"Look out at the dry river, Koriba," she said, pointing down the hill. "Study it well, for it is Kirinyaga, barren and unchanging."

I looked down upon the river. "Its changelessness is one of its virtues," I said.

"But it is a river," she said. "All *living* things change — even the Kikuyu."

"Not on Kirinyaga," I said adamantly.

"They change or they die," she continued. "I do not intend to die. You have won the battle, Koriba, but the war goes on."

Before I could answer her she turned and walked down the long, winding path to the village.

* * *

That afternoon I brought down the rains. The river filled with water, the fields turned green, the cattle and goats and the animals of the savannah slaked their thirst and renewed their strength, and the world of Kirinyaga returned to healthy, vigorous life

But from that day forth, Njoro never again addressed me as *mzee,* the traditional term of respect the Kikuyu have always used to signify age and wisdom. Siboki built two large containers for water, each the size of a large hut, and threatened to harm anyone who came near them. Even Ndemi, who had previously absorbed everything I taught him without question, now seemed to consider and weigh each of my statements carefully before accepting them.

Kibo's baby died, and Mumbi moved into her *boma* until Kibo regained her health, then built her own hut out in the fields of Koinnage's *shamba*. Since she was still officially living on his property, I chose to ignore it. She remained there until the next long rains, at which time she became so infirm that she finally had to move to the hut she had formerly occupied. Now that she needed the help of her family she accepted it, but Koinnage later told me that she never sang again after she left my hill.

As for myself, I spent many long days on my hill, watching the river flow past, clear and cool and unchanging, and wondering uneasily if I had somehow had changed the course of that other, more important river through which we all must swim.

*Whenever I take a trip to Africa, I write up a diary for Hugo-winning* Lan's Lantern *(which has not won a Hugo since it began running these diaries, from which you may draw whatever snide conclusion you wish). Anyway, our 1990 safari was our longest yet, and probably our most interesting as well.*

# Between the Sunlight and the Thunder

*August 28, 1990.* Between the bright sunlight of East Africa's safari countries, and the ominous thunder coming out of the Republic of South Africa, there exist four nations: Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, and Botswana. We had originally hoped to visit all four on this extended safari, but Mozambique is in the throes of a brutal civil war, so we confined ourselves to the other three countries, where I would be researching *Purgatory* and *Ophir*, a pair of novels I'll be writing in the next couple of years, and hopefully coming up with some more ideas.

This was a unique safari for us, in that we did not arrange to go with a single guide, as we always do in Kenya, nor did we care to join a package tour. Instead, we made a list of all the locations we wanted to see in all three countries, then hunted up a travel agency (we found it, finally, in York, England) that was able to arrange our itinerary.

The first step, as always, was the 8-hour flight to London, during which time I did my best not to feel bitter over losing the Hugo after leading for the first five ballots. I didn't quite pull it off.

*August 29, 1990:* We landed at Gatwick at seven in the morning, took a bus to Heathrow after clearing customs, and waited around the airport for almost 12 hours for our 10-hour flight to Zimbabwe to take off. I love Africa; it's the process of getting there that I hate.

*August 30, 1990:* We landed in Harare (formerly Salisbury), the capital of Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), and dragged our exhausted (formerly energetic) bodies to Meikles Hotel, a large, luxury hotel in the city center right across from Cecil Square While Carol took a nap, I went out walking, and found that there is an enormous difference between Harare and its Kenyan counterpart, Nairobi. One gets the feeling that if the tourist industry vanished, 98% of the people you see in Nairobi would find themselves out of work; whereas if it vanished from Harare, no one would know the difference. Which is a roundabout way of saying that Harare is a working city, with very little to interest the casual tourist.

In fact, we soon came to realize that Zimbabwe is a working country. President Robert Mugabe continually gives lip service to communism, but it's a capitalist country from top to bottom...and unlike most African countries, it works The roads are all paved, the electricity works around the clock, the water is safe to drink, there are schools every couple of miles throughout the countryside, poachers have made almost no inroads in most of the game parks, and unemployment doesn't seem to be much of a problem. In fact, I would say that Zimbabwe is as well-developed, and runs as smoothly, as most Eastern European nations. I realize that doesn't sound like much, but when you compare it to Kenya or Tanzania or Zambia, it's a quantum leap forward.

I signed copies of *Ivory* and *Paradise* in a local bookstore, then returned to Meikles and changed for dinner. We ate at the Bagatelle, a 5-star dining room in the hotel, where, in a delightful twist, the proprietors were black and the piano player was white.

*August 31:* When I checked out in the morning, I presented Meikles with a paid voucher — which they refused to accept. Evidently they had been paid in Zimbabwean dollars, and because the country is so starved for hard currency, they have a law stating that all foreign travelers must pay in their own currency. So I very begrudgingly paid for my room for a second time, and made a mental note to bill the travel agency.

We had decided to begin our safari in Botswana (formerly Bechuanaland)...but, because we would be flying around the country in 5-seaters with severe weight limitations, we first flew to the Victoria Falls Hotel, where we left some of our luggage. The hotel itself is an old colonial structure that reminded me of some of the better British hotels in the Brighton area.

We had seen a sign in the Victoria Falls airport telling us that we must report at least an hour early for international flights or run the risk of having our seats sold Our flight to Botswana was due to leave at 2:30 in the afternoon, and the bus from the hotel didn't leave until 1:30. A number of people who were taking the flight panicked, and began offering up to $100 to anyone who would drive them to the airport and get them there by 1:30. Since the flight is scheduled three times a week, we figured that the hotel hadn't received any complaints about it, and waited for the bus. It got us there at about 2:00, and the Botswana plane didn't show up for another two hours (par for the course, the flight attendant later admitted).

The flight to Maun, Botswana, took perhaps an hour, and shortly thereafter we were ensconced in Riley's Hotel, which has a long and

colorful history from colonial times, but has become a rather dull hostelry in the middle of a rather dull town.

*September 1:* When I stopped by the desk to hand in my voucher, they announced that they had no record of a previous payment, and I would have to pay for the room. At this point I hit the roof, FAXed the travel agency in York, and raised bloody hell. They assured me that we would have no further problems with our vouchers, and they were right (which is not to say that we had no further problems in other areas).

We went to the airport — Maun consists of nothing but the airport, three gift shops, a few houses, a few huts, and Riley's — and took our chartered 5-seater to Jedibe Island Camp, in the heart of the Okavango Delta, where, after more than 4 days, we finally stopped traveling and started vacationing.

Jedibe is a small island, with ten tents, two ablution blocks (a euphemism for bathrooms, which consist of a toilet and a shower, surrounded by a rather shaky reed fence and no roof), a bar, and a dining tent. It's run by Tony and Pam, a second-generation Kenyan and Zambian, respectively, who migrated down to Okavango when their own countries got too civilized, and there was only one other guest there when we arrived.

If there is a better way to decompress after a long trip than riding in a *mokoro*, I don't know what it is. The *mokoro* is a dugout canoe, and while you sit up front and watch the Okavango go by, a strong young man stands at the back and poles you along. We went out in *mokoros* in mid-morning, and stayed out until dinnertime. Carol, the bird expert in the family, tells me it was the best single day of bird-watching she's ever experienced.

The Okavango Delta is some 1,600 square miles of swamp, with about 200,000 miles of very narrow, winding channels. By the time we were twenty minutes out from camp, I figured that, left to my

own devices, I might, with luck, be able to find my way back in something less than eight months...yet our polers always seemed to know exactly where they were, and you got the feeling you could set them down anywhere in the Okavango and they'd be able to find their way home with no problem. I remarked about that to Pam, who agreed that they were death and taxes in the Okavango, but added that three of them went to Johannesburg for Christmas and got hopelessly lost in half an hour.

*September 2:* We went out on a powerboat in order to see more of the swamp (*mokoros* are many things, but fast isn't one of them), packed a box lunch which we ate on a totally uninhabited island, and returned to camp in time to meet Franco and Masimo, a pair of Italians who work for Mondedori, my Italian publisher, and were making a documentary film about the Okavango. Masimo, a perfectionist, had wanted an overhead shot of the Delta, and refused to photograph it through the window of the plane.. so they opened the door and he and his camera hung out, upside down, while Franco held onto his feet. The result: exceptional footage and an exceptional inner-ear infection.

They also wanted footage of a fish eagle swooping down and snaring a fish out of the water Tony had trained a local fish eagle to do just that when baited, and we went along while the fish eagle went through his paces about a dozen times and we all got some fabulous footage.

That night I went to the ablution block at about midnight. While I was there, a hippo came out of the swamp and began rubbing his sides against the reed wall. Hippos have killed more tourists in Africa during the past quarter century than any other animal, and the reason is simple: they panic when they are cut off from water...and the very best time to photograph a hippo is when he goes inland to eat, as otherwise all you're likely to see are his eyes,

ears, and nostrils. (They stay in the water to protect their sensitive skins from the sun all day, but at night they leave the water and consume up to 300 pounds of vegetation.) Stand between a hippo and water and his first inclination is to run through — not around — you to get back to the safety of his pond or river.

Now, Jedibe is a very small island, perhaps 300 yards in diameter. So I reasoned it out and concluded that if I left the ablution block, all the hippo had to do was turn around and he could make a beeline to the water. Then I got to thinking, and decided that if he was an exceptionally stupid hippo, then no matter where I stood, he would conclude that I was between him and the water (and in a way, he'd be right). So I stayed another half hour until he want away, and promptly bumped into a bushbuck on the way back to the tent. Bushbucks are much more intelligent than hippos; he took one look at me and ran like hell.

*September 3*: Our bush pilot, Lee, picked us up in mid-morning and flew us to Tsaro Lodge in the Moremi Reserve. (Pam remarked that Lee had stuck it out much longer than most bush pilots — something like seven years now — because he liked the social life in Maun. I am still mulling over this remark, because to my way of thinking, Maun is the kind of place you leave in order to *have* a social life. Oh, well...)

Tsaro is a luxurious camp nestled on the Khwai River, composed of eight large, spotlessly-clean chalets, each equipped with beds, chairs, couches, fireplaces, tiled bathrooms, and electricity — all rarities in the bush. The current manager, Jack, used to be a game warden in Zimbabwe, and I gather the place has undergone massive renovations since he arrived. There were three couples from Cape Town there when we arrived, and they turned out to be the friendliest and most interesting people we met on the entire safari; in fact, when we go to South Africa, which we plan to do in a couple

of years, each of them has insisted that we stay with them and let them show us around.

We took a game run (a three-hour drive through the reserve in a 4-wheel-drive vehicle) in the afternoon, and were actually charged by an irate cow elephant, a hell of an exciting ten seconds that I managed to capture on videotape.

*September 4:* After a morning game run, Carol and I and two of our Cape Town friends decided to take a walk through the hunting concession that borders the reserve. We saw some birds, and a herd of red lewche, and some bushbuck — and then we walked around a heavy stand of trees and damned near bumped into a lone elephant. It's difficult to say who was more surprised; it is not difficult to say who retreated more rapidly.

A German couple showed up in late afternoon. It turns out that this was their 25th wedding anniversary, and they had brought along champagne for the whole camp. It's amazing what you can have in the bush if your timing is right.

*September 5:* We took a morning game run, then got picked up by our social lion pilot and flown to the Linyanti Channel, where we were met and driven to Linyanti Camp, another primitive bush camp with tents and outdoor bathrooms. This one was run by Ron, a devoted birder, and his wife, Hillary. They had a 6-month-old baby who was so quiet we didn't know he was there until bedtime, when Ron picked up his rifle and led the way to his rather distant cabin, while Hillary followed him, pushing a baby carriage. Not quite your everyday African sight.

We arrived just as a large party (well, as large a party as a seven-tent camp can handle, anyway) was leaving, and had the camp all to ourselves for a day. In the afternoon we went out on the channel in a double-decker pontoon, drifted into Namibia for an hour, and saw

a bunch of birds and a handful of elephants. Still, the Linyanti area was a disappointment. the camp backs up to the river, and is surrounded on three sides by a hunting concession, and the place is pretty much shot out. The top of the food chain, both in mammals and birds, was gone; there was just nothing left for them to eat.

At dinnertime we were joined by Derek Joubert, a National Geographic filmmaker who had a permanent camp a few miles away. I have a couple of his documentaries on videotape, which pleased him no end, and I remarked on the similarity of his name to that of Keith Joubert, a renowned wildlife artist whose prints of the "Big Five" Carol had bought me for my birthday last March. It turned out that they were brothers, and that Keith, the only man ever to paint a portrait of the Kilimanjaro Elephant (which he did from the figures in Rowland Ward's record book, the elephant itself having died almost a century ago) had read and enjoyed *Ivory*, which is based on the elephant.

*September 6.* We had a very disappointing game run in the morning — not much is still alive and moving in Linyanti — but I made up for it by coming up with a couple of short story ideas that I'll be writing in the next few months.

In the afternoon some more guests showed up, including a rather adventuresome American girl who works for a bank with international connections, and has spent time representing them in Peru, Chile, Poland, and Hong Kong. (How adventuresome? Well, this spring she flew to Antarctica for a week as a guest of the Chilean Air Force.) We also met the ultimate Ugly American, a New York lady who didn't stop talking for the next six hours, had nothing good to say about anyone or anything, and made us realize why so many people intensely dislike Americans Fortunately, she came down with a sore throat at dinnertime, and we didn't have to listen to her the rest of the night.

*September 7:* After a 3-hour walk in search of game that simply didn't exist, we happily took our leave of Linyanti, and went next to the most luxurious hostelry in Africa. (Yeah, I know I've said in print that that honor belongs to the Mount Kenya Safari Club. So sue me: I was wrong. The Chobe Game Lodge has it beat all hollow.)

Chobe National Park is the crown jewel of Botswana's parks. It possesses 30,000 elephants, almost three times the total that remain in all of Kenya. It has 150,000 buffalo, in herds of up to 5,000. It has hundreds of lions. It also has the Chobe Game Lodge.

We had arranged to stay in the same suite where Richard Burton and Liz Taylor honeymooned after their second marriage (Suite 210, for anyone who wishes to experience it themselves). It was immense, elegant, air-conditioned. .and it had a 75-foot terrace and its own private swimming pool — so private, in fact, that we never bothered with our swimsuits. After all those days of tents and outdoor bathrooms, it was so luxurious that it took a real effort of will power to leave long enough to look at animals.

The food was on a par with the accommodations. Our first night there, dinner consisted of Eggs Florentine as an appetizer, ragout of impala (the best game meal we've ever had) as a main course, and trifle with custard sauce for dessert. Lunch was a buffet that covered five tables, with so many delicacies that you could go on tilt trying to pick and choose from among them. There were numerous lounges and bars, a fabulous outdoor dining terrace, the best gift shop we'd seen in the country, and there was even a room with a large-screen TV and a selection of videotapes, each a documentary on some aspect of Botswana and its wildlife.

The Chobe Lodge is much the largest lodge in Botswana, though it holds less than 100 people and is at best medium-sized by East African standards. The reason for this is that Botswana, which is 87% Kalahari Desert and which nobody seemed to want — not

Britain, not South Africa, not anybody — suddenly discovered the world's two largest diamond mines in the early 1980s. As a result, they have more money than they need, and have decided to keep their tourist industry small rather than ecologically degrade their parks by running too many cars and tourists through them.

We took a boat out on the Chobe River in the afternoon and watched as hundreds of elephants and thousands of buffalo came down to drink, then picked our way among the hippos and crocs and returned to our suite, wondering why we had bothered with all those other locations when we could have spent the entire Botswana section of our safari right here.

*September 8:* Another day of luxury, punctuated with a pair of game runs. In the morning, we managed to find a pride of lions on a kill, and to see some cheetahs, which are quite rare in these parts. In the afternoon, we saw literally thousands of elephants, as well as 30 or 40 other species of mammals (as well as one of the lions from the morning, carrying a buffalo leg in her mouth as proudly as a puppy carries a toy). It's a damned good thing we did, too, as I deeply resented any time spent away from that suite. Dinner was freshly-caught bream, kudu in cream sauce, and good old hot fudge sundaes. I'm a teetotaler, but Carol tells me the wine was superb.

*September 9:* Another morning game run, and the elephant and buffalo were so numerous that I was beginning to feel jaded. Then we got into a van and were driven some 50 miles to the Victoria Falls Hotel in Zimbabwe, where we picked up the luggage we had stored there, checked into a room, and promptly slept the afternoon away. (All that luxury exhausted our systems, I guess.) We woke up just in time for their nightly spectacular, a lavish pageant of native dances, which turned out to be more authentic and less tourist-oriented than we had feared.

*September 10* We stopped by a native crafts village, not knowing quite what to expect, and were pleasantly surprised to find that it, too, was more educational than tourist-oriented. From there we went to the Falls, truly one of the wonders of the world. The Zambezi River was the lowest it's been in 40 years, which actually was to our benefit, as when the river is high the Falls create such a spray that you can't make out the features, let alone photograph them.

We took the much-hyped Sundowner Cruise in the afternoon. Very disappointing, if you're not heavily into booze. The boat never got near the Falls (or anything else worth seeing), and most of the passengers were three sheets to the wind before the cruise even started.

*September 11:* We took a noontime flight to Hwange National Park, where we were escorted to the Hwange Game Lodge, perhaps half a star down in luxury from the Chobe Game Lodge. Though we had requested a room, we were given an enormous suite at no extra cost. (Upon leaving I asked the manager why; he replied that it was empty, he had recognized my name on the guest list, he had read *Ivory* and *Paradise* and *Adventures*, and since I was obviously on a research trip, he hoped that I would remember him kindly when I got around to writing a novel about Zimbabwe.)

Our guide was a young man named Mark, who asked what we would like to see that afternoon. Well, I said, giving him what I thought would be a totally impossible task, we haven't yet seen sable, roan, kudu, or rhino. Within 45 minutes we had seen them all, plus a couple of hundred elephants and some exceptionally rare eagles.

This is some park, this Hwange. It's the largest in Zimbabwe, and has just about every species of mammal you could wish for. It's also paved — something that I thought existed nowhere outside of

South Africa's Kruger National Park — and the rangers have created a number of huge, artificial water holes, so that the game doesn't migrate. The park is immaculate — you would swear they mow and rake it every day — and except for Tanzania's Ngorongoro Crater, we have never seen such a large number and variety of animals in one place

Dinner (eland and impala in exquisite sauces) was superb, as were all the various services provided by the lodge, and it is our conclusion that as luxurious as the Block lodges in Kenya are, the Sun chain in Zimbabwe — consisting of Hwange, the Victoria Falls Hotel, the Monomatapa, the Montclair, the Troutbeck Inn, and half a dozen others — is even more so. The staffs are courteous and expertly-trained, the food is world-class, and the accommodations are usually equal to anything you can find in New York or London. For those of you who want to see Africa in absolute luxury, where the words "rough it" do not exist, just mosey down to Zimbabwe and make the circuit of Sun hotels.

*September 12.* Two more fabulous game runs, three more fabulous meals, and a lot of loafing in our suite After dinner we walked out to a spotlighted waterhole about a quarter-mile away, climbed up to a bar that was perched on stilts overlooking it, and spent the next couple of hours watching and photographing an endless procession of animals as they came down to drink.

*September 13.* We took a morning game run, then stayed around the lodge until our midafternoon flight to Lake Kariba.

Kariba is a man-made lake, more than 100 miles long, 30 miles wide, and (in places) 1500 feet deep. When it was created some 30 years ago, it literally put a dent in the earth...but unlike most projects of this type, it didn't foul up the ecosystem. It not only provides power for most of Zimbabwe and Zambia, it is also the

biggest damned reservoir you ever saw, as well as a huge vacation area bringing in all kinds of hard currency. They also stocked the lake with fish, left them alone for a few years while they grew fruitful and multiplied, and now pull some eight tons of fish per day out of it.

We knew all this before we got there — but until you fly over the lake, until you look out both windows of your plane and see that water extending almost to infinity, you can't begin to appreciate the magnitude of the project. If the Victoria Falls are an awe-inspiring work of God (or Whoever), Lake Kariba is an equally awe-inspiring work of Man.

We arrived at the Caribbea Bay Hotel, probably the least impressive member of the Sun chain, in late afternoon, and while Carol was unpacking, I scouted around to find us a restaurant — and came up with Pedro's in the basement of the hotel, an authentic Mexican restaurant in the heart of Africa.

*September 14:* In the morning we took a ferry to the Sanyati Lodge, on the far side of the lake. The landscape, far from being the flat land that usually leads up to a lakeshore, was formerly the tops of some mountains (remember: this is a man-made lake), and we climbed about 150 steps up to our cabin, which had a gorgeous view of the Sanyati Gorge, a channel between two mountain tops that rose up out of the water.

Our hosts were Hans, a former farmer who Carol declares is the best birder she's ever met, and his new bride, Diana. We asked Diana to radio ahead and find out what time we had to catch a charter plane to our next destination, Chikwenya Camp in the Mana Pools Reserve; she did so, and reported that because of some foul-up we had been scheduled to arrive at Mana Pools on August 16, not September 16, and that Chikwenya was sold out. We told her to tell them we had paid vouchers and planned to show up anyway,

and it was their job to find someplace to put us. They reluctantly agreed, and Diana mentioned in passing that Sanyati had been unable to reconfirm our arrival but since they had been paid in advance had simply set aside our cabin and assumed we were coming.

(I just *love* making travel arrangements in the Third World.)

Since Sanyati is a mountaintop surrounded on all sides by water, game drives and walks were out of the question, and we selected from among a number of boats that Hans had. The seascape was positively unearthly: tops of thousands of trees poked up out of the water, and because it was in the mid-90s, the evaporation caused a haze that obscured the horizon; certainly no alien world could appear more exotic than this, and I will find a way to appropriate it for one of my books.

We went along the coast of the Matusadona National Park and saw thousands of animals drinking and walking along the shoreline, then went back and climbed all those damned stairs again. I had just gotten to sleep when Wellington, the camp cat, decided he would enjoy mousing my toes, a process that continued all night; since my own cats, Nick and Nora, find endless fascination in keeping me awake, I felt right at home.

*September 15:* We took two rides in a pontoon: a morning ride into the Sanyati Gorge itself, an afternoon ride to Matusadona, where we got within ten yards of five bull elephants who spent almost an hour bathing and frolicking in the water. Wellington felt deserted and bit harder than usual during the night.

*September 16:* We flew up to Mana Pools in the Zambezi Valley, where we were driven to Chikwenya Camp and found out that two couples who were arriving by canoe had run up against a hard current and would be two days late, which meant that we got our

accommodation after all. This was a bush camp to end all bush camps: elephants felt free to wander through it at all times of the day and night, and while we have frequently had small lizards in our tents (actually a beneficial circumstance, since they eat insects), this was the first time we ever shared our quarters with a snake. (I don't know if he ate insects, but he certainly ate lizards.)

Our hosts were Jeff and Veronica Stutchbury. Jeff is quite famous in these parts, having been the very first game warden at the South Luangwa Valley National Park in Zambia, and has had numerous articles and photographs published in wildlife journals. Their three sons also make a living from wildlife, one as a photographer, one as a painter, and one as a documentary filmmaker.

Jeff was probably the most knowledgeable guide we've ever been out with; he was unquestionably the most eccentric. He found beauty in every living thing, knew the natural history of everything we saw, and had the attention span of a 9-week-old puppy. Some game runs never got more than 500 yards from camp, as Jeff would find an exotic tree and explain its workings for hours; others would take us far afield and run for four or five hours, driving Veronica and her kitchen staff crazy. Jeff and his associate, David, never went anywhere without their rifles, which, they explained, were never used against game but were reserved for poachers. (Mana Pools is the park where most of the Rhino Wars have occurred: so far they've killed over 150 Zambian poachers in two years. Unfortunately, they're breaking about even, one poacher per lost rhino. Since they've only got about 2,000 black rhinos left in the whole country, and there are ten million hungry Zambians across the Zambezi River, the mathematics of the situation don't look promising.)

*September 17:* We took a boat down the Zambezi to the one sight Carol has always wanted to see: a colony of nesting carmine

bee-eaters. Even I, a non-birder, couldn't help but be impressed by 10,000 colorful birds flocking and nesting in thousands of holes along the high banks of the river. Then, when it was time to return for breakfast, Jeff decided to take a little walk. Around an island. A 5-mile-in-circumference island. We ran into buffalo and kudu and elephant, and got home just before noon. I thought Veronica was going to kill him, although he does this every three or four days and she really ought to be used to it by now. (In the States, he'd be the kind of guy who walked down the driveway to fetch the paper, disappeared for three weeks, and couldn't understand why everyone was so upset when he finally showed up.)

One of the guests was an elderly lady from Texas, who had come to Zimbabwe to judge a cattle show, and decided to see a little of the country before leaving. If she was interested in anything beside cattle and barbecue sauce, she kept it a secret. She continually walked away from camp on her own (and this camp was surrounded by more wild animals than any within memory), she wore sweaters and panty-hose in 98-degree weather, and she complained non-stop. Finally her long-suffering companion simply locked her in her cabin for the afternoon, and a golden silence descended upon the rest of Chikwenya.

*September 18:* We were a little late arriving at the landing strip — elephants blocked our way for half an hour — but the plane waited for us, dropped us off at Lake Kariba, and from there we caught a flight back to Harare, where this time Meikles Hotel honored our voucher. It had been exactly three weeks since we were there, and the change was electrifying: all the jacarandas were in bloom, and the whole city was a riot of spring color. (Yes, spring: this is south of the Equator.)

I celebrated getting away from our snake and our outdoor

plumbing by taking two showers, donning a coat and tie, and having Lobster Thermidor at the Bagatelle.

*September 19:* This morning we picked up a car and driver for the remainder of our stay in Zimbabwe. The car was a semi-new Mitsubishi; the driver was Lazarus, a somber type who could find something depressing about winning the Irish Sweepstakes.

We drove from Harare to the Inyanga Mountains in the east of the country, and as we began ascending them the fog closed in around us to the point where we could barely see ten yards ahead. We finally reached the Montclair Hotel at about noon, checked in, and decided to spend the rest of the day loafing and reading rather than driving on narrow, winding mountain roads with almost no visibility.

The Montclair is an elegant English-style hotel, with a dart room, a billiard room, a gambling casino, a riding stable, tennis courts, a swimming pool, two fine restaurants (I recommend the Topside), and the strangest-looking staff you'd ever want to see. Each of them — and there were a hell of a lot of them — was bald and bearded; when we asked about it, Lazarus explained that they were members of a Pentecostal sect that thought shaving their heads but not their faces brought them a bit closer to heaven.

*September 20:* We were still socked in with fog when I awoke, but I didn't feel like spending another day doing nothing — even a high-quality nothing such as the hotel offered — so I told Lazarus to meet me at 10:30 and we'd try to drive around a bit; Carol took one look out the window and told me that she was staying inside. When we got two miles away from the Montclair the air became crystal clear, and we realized that the mountains weren't covered by fog after all. what had happened was that a cloud had come to rest exactly atop the Montclair. We drove back, got Carol, and spent the rest of the day sightseeing in the mountains

We saw Cecil Rhodes' mountain home, and the Rhodes Museum, and World's View, and a reconstruction of an ancient village, and one of the world's more dangerous golf courses (hit the ball in the water and you get eaten by crocs; hit it in the trees and you get eaten by leopards; overshoot the green and you fall 11,000 feet to your death). We ate lunch at the Troutbeck Inn, then drove to some waterfalls where we had to climb part of a mountain and walk out on a very precarious ledge to see them (Lazarus pointed the way, then locked himself in the car and waited for us, convinced we would fall off the precipice), and finally returned to the hotel, which was still surrounded by its very own cloud.

*September 21:* We left the Montclair and its cloud behind, and drove down the eastern side of the country to Mutare, easily the prettiest African city we've seen. Once there we turned off and went to La Rochelle, the magnificent estate of Lord and Lady Courtauld, who had willed it to Zimbabwe It contains fourteen acres of the most beautiful gardens I've ever seen, with numerous little streams and wooden bridges connecting the various sections. From there we drove to a tiny colonial hotel, the White Horse Inn, for lunch, then stopped by the Vumba Gardens, some 98 hectares worth of meticulously-kept flowers and greenery. Then we headed south for Masvingo and the Great Zimbabwe ruins, picking up a flat tire along the way; we drove the final 100 kilometers with no spare, and got a second flat just as we were pulling into the Great Zimbabwe Hotel. While Carol and I slept the sleep of the innocent, Lazarus earned his salary by hunting up some friends, finding an all-night gas station (unheard-of in all other African countries), and getting the car in shape before breakfast.

*September 22:* Carol and I walked a mile from the hotel to Great Zimbabwe, the oldest and most impressive ruins in all of

sub-Saharan Africa, and the structure that gave Southern Rhodesia its new name. This was a gold-trading society that existed about a millennium ago, and built a stone fortress with walls some 40 feet high. I spent about two hours photographing it and taking notes, as it will figure prominently in one of the books I'll be writing next year.

Then, when I thought we were through, Lazarus showed up and told us that there was an equally impressive ruin we hadn't seen yet. Where, I asked. Up there, he said, pointing to a nearby mountain. So we spent another hour climbing up to the second ruin, and once I caught my breath I had to admit he was right: it's every bit as impressive as the one most people photograph (the so-called Great Enclosure), perhaps even more so, considering that every one of its million or so stones had to be carried up the mountain.

We drove back to Harare in the afternoon, checked into Meikles again (they weren't so sure about taking my voucher this time, but eventually they relented), and we spent our final night in Zimbabwe pigging out on a huge tray of food we ordered from room service.

*September 23:* We drove to the airport in early afternoon and caught a plane to Lilongwe, the new capital of Malawi (formerly Nyasaland). Upon arriving, we found the representative from Soche Tours, which had subcontracted the Malawi portion of our safari.

"You'd better hurry," she said. "Your flight to Blantyre is about to leave."

"We're not flying there," I said, showing her our itinerary and voucher. "You're supplying us with a car and driver, so we can see some of the countryside."

"We are?" she said, as the Blantyre plane began coasting down the runway. "Nobody told me."

Eventually the lady's boyfriend volunteered to drive us the three

and one-half hours to Blantyre. It was dark before we left Lilongwe; so much for sightseeing.

As we were driving, we noticed that there were absolutely no lights on the right side of the road, and asked Joey, our driver, about it. The answer was chilling in its simplicity: the road was the border between Malawi and Mozambique, and if you so much as lit a match on the right side of the road, you were likely to get your head blown off by a rebel before you could bring it up to your cigarette.

So for two hours we hugged the left-hand side of the road and hoped nobody felt like shooting a car. You can't imagine the relief we felt when we turned east and finally saw lights on both sides of the road.

Joey left us off at the Mount Soche Hotel. Our room was on the fourth of its five floors — which turned out to be the only floor the idiosyncratic elevator didn't stop at. Not the most auspicious beginning.

*September 24:* Soche Tours got its act together long enough to introduce us to Mike Makwakwa, a young man who would be our driver for the rest of the safari. We decided to start with a little tour around Blantyre. As we drove through the city, we noted that a number of buildings were decorated with red stars. Mike explained that each star marked the home or business of an Indian, and that they had been slated for destruction or renovation. We also found out that all the Indians, who form the merchant class in almost every sub-Saharan country, had been forcibly relocated to just three Malawian cities: Blantyre, Lilongwe, and Zomba.

Most of the buildings with red stars were in far better condition that those without, and I couldn't help remembering what happened the last time a government decided to mark buildings owned by an ethnic minority with stars. The only difference was the color:

yellow then, red now. I would not want to be an Indian living in Malawi in the coming months and years.

Malawi, by the way, is ruled by a dictator who bears the title of President For Life Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Banda left the country as a child, spent more than a half century in England and the U.S.A., and was called back in 1958 when independence seemed imminent, as he was the only Malawiian with a college degree and they needed a figurehead president. They drafted a model constitution, and assumed that once they got the hang of self-government, Banda would step down in a couple of years, if he hadn't died of old age.

All that was a quarter of a century ago. Banda killed and jailed his enemies, had himself proclaimed President For Life, made sure no foreign entity could start a business in Malawi unless he, Banda, owned 51% of the stock, and developed what are considered to be the most efficient death squads south of the Sahara. He is 91 years old, speaks no language but English (and has an interpreter for his three-hour orations), and has become a hideous caricature of The Man Who Came To Dinner. In other words, he ain't leaving.

That having been said, I must also point out that tourists are treated with enormous courtesy and deference (to the very uncomfortable point of being called "Master" by most of the waiters and porters), since we represent a source of hard currency, and every effort is made to shield us from what is really going on there. (I had been warned not to mention I was a writer. The government does not differentiate between fiction writers and journalists, and in Banda's opinion the only good journalist is a journalist who is rotting in a Malawi prison.)

The press is as thoroughly controlled as any I've ever seen. Each day's newspaper is the same. the front page has two long articles praising Banda, the next five pages consist of 20 quarter-page ads by major businesses proclaiming "Long Live Kamuzu!", and if you're lucky, you can find a paragraph or two about Iraq and South

Africa somewhere on page 7. This is followed by another dozen pages of ads thanking God for President Banda.

The country is physically the most beautiful of all the African nations we've visited, and the people are the sweetest and friendliest. Most of them literally worship Banda — but that stands to reason. 80% of them are under 25 years of age, which means they've been subjected to his propaganda every day of their lives.

After touring the city, we drove through the tea country (most of it owned by Banda) to Mount Mulanje, the tallest mountain in Malawi, and drove almost to the top, stopping along the way to look at a couple of waterfalls. In the afternoon we stopped by Blantyre's zoo (which seemed to specialize in American turtles), and the Museum of Malawi, which had some interesting relics from the nation's recent and distant history. The museum's guide believes devoutly in witchcraft, but that little idiosyncrasy aside, gave us a thorough and fascinating private tour.

We returned to the Mount Soche Hotel for dinner in their upscale penthouse restaurant, then returned to our room. The bathroom was unique: most toilets in the world operate by levers; this one required you to push a button with about 400 foot-pounds of force (Carol's comment: "Flushing that damned toilet is the most exercise I've had all week.")

*September 25:* We drove to the city of Zomba, the former colonial capital (Lilongwe is a brand-new city, with huge, impressive buildings erected with foreign aid that was thrown at Banda for opposing communism — an easy thing to do, since there isn't a communist in the entire country), then drove up a long, winding road to the top of the Zomba Plateau, from which one could see practically the entire country.

Then it was off to the Shire River (pronounced "Shirry") and a pontoon ride through the Liwonde National Park. Finally we

drove to Club Makakola, a beach resort on Lake Malawi where we would be spending the next two nights...and where we were informed that our voucher from Soche Tours was for the nearby (and much lower-rated) Nkopola Lodge.

I saw a bunch of keys on the wall, and asked if they had any empty rondovals. Lots, they said. Do you want our money, I asked. Sure, they said. Then get those bastards at Soche Tours on the phone and let me yell at them for 30 seconds, I said. They did so, and 30 seconds later Soche Tours transferred our money from Nkopola to Club Makakola. (Everyone in the African travel industry is friendly and polite, but efficiency is not their long and strong suit — especially in seldom-visited Malawi.)

*September 26:* Club Makakola was very much like a Caribbean beach resort, but with different (and more) bird life. In the morning, Carol and I rented a catamaran and its crew, and spent the next three hours on Lake Malawi. We visited the aptly-named Bird Island, stopped by some fishing villages, and cruised by the American embassy's super-luxury beach house, then spent the rest of the day loafing on the beach.

*September 27* We drove through the highlands, stopping here and there to take pictures and talk to the locals, passed through Lilongwe at noon, and headed north to our final destination, the Lifupa Lodge at Kasungu National Park. Just before reaching it we passed by a fairy-tale palace, a glistening white building which could easily accommodate a Worldcon; it turned out to be Banda's newest home, which overlooked a few hundred mud huts occupied by his loyal subjects.

Kasungu was sad The park, which as recently as two years ago possessed a truly magnificent selection of game, has been almost totally poached out. The elephant population, estimated at 1,800 in

1982, is less than 100; there are no rhinos left; and while the Zambian poachers were busy collecting ivory and rhino horns, the hungry hordes of Malawians who surround the park poached most of the other animals for meat. The death knell was sounding while we were there: a crew of six international tsetse fly abatement experts were busy eradicating the last flies from the park — at which time nothing on earth will stop the local subsistence farmers and cattle herders from encroaching on the park's boundaries. I'd be surprised if it still exists ten years from now.

*September 28:* We took two game runs, hiring a local ranger and a 4-wheel-drive vehicle (and making a note to bill Soche Tours for it, since we had already paid for it months earlier, a fact that no one except Carol and I seemed aware of). In six hours with a guide who knew the park inside out, we saw one large herd of buffalo, a few roan antelope, small herds of impala and zebra, and a lone elephant — less than we might expect to see five minutes into a game drive in Hwange, Chobe, Mana Pools, or Moremi.

Our rondoval was quite large, and absolutely immaculate — until we inspected the shower, which was so filthy that we elected to remain dirty until we reached London.

*September 29.* We spent the morning watching hippos and birds from the porch of our rondoval (which faced a small lake), then got into the car and drove to Lilongwe, where we had lunch at the Capital Hotel — the only world-class accommodation in the country — and went to the airport, where we were (politely) frisked and our luggage was (politely) searched. The airport bookstore had a huge display of *Santiago* and *Ivory*. I was about to mention that I was the author, and ask the proprietor if he wanted any copies autographed; then I remembered where I was, and thought better of it.

Still, for all its problems (or, more likely, because of them), Malawi proved to be more fertile ground for story ideas than Zimbabwe and Botswana, and bits and pieces of it will be turning up in my books and stories for some years to come. Which is not to imply that we didn't both breathe hearty sighs of relief as the plane took off.

*September 30:* We landed at Heathrow, took a bus to Gatwick, and checked into the Gatwick Hilton, where we spent the rest of the day alternately showering and sleeping.

*October 1:* We landed in Cincinnati in mid-afternoon, and I immediately bought a newspaper and turned to the sports section. The Reds had just clinched the National League West, and the Bengals were unbeaten in their first three games. (The Reds promptly dropped 3 games in the next 48 hours, and the Bengals lost their first game of the year that night. As I write this, I am waiting for the management of both teams to phone me and offer to pay my way back to Africa so they can start winning again. I can hardly wait to take them up on it.)

*My two favorite historical characters of the 20th Century are Teddy Roosevelt and John Boyes. They met only once, for perhaps three or four hours, in the Lado Enclave, in January of 1910 — but that was enough to serve as the impetus for this story, the first alternate history I ever attempted (and, I think, my best novella to date).*

# Bully!

- I -

THE DATE WAS JANUARY 8, 1910.

* * *

*"At midnight we had stopped at the station of Koba, where we were warmly received by the district commissioner, and where we met half a dozen of the professional elephant hunters, who for the most part make their money, at hazard of their lives, by poaching ivory in the Congo. They are a hard-bit set, these elephant poachers; there are few careers more adventurous, or fraught with more peril, or which make heavier demands upon the daring, the endurance, and the physical hardihood of those who follow them. Elephant hunters face death at every turn, from fever, from the assaults of warlike native tribes, from their conflicts with their giant*

*quarry; and the unending strain on their health and strength is tremendous."*

—*Theodore Roosevelt,* African Game Trails

*"...When we were all assembled in my tent and champagne had been served out to everyone except Roosevelt —who insisted on drinking non-intoxicants, though his son Kermit joined us —he raised his glass and gave the toast 'To the Elephant Poachers of the Lado Enclave.' As we drank with him one or two of us laughingly protested his bluntness, so he gravely amended his toast to 'The Gentleman Adventurers of Central Africa', 'for,' he added, 'that is the title by which you would have been known in Queen Elizabeth's time.'*

*"A real man, with the true outdoor spirit, the ex-President's sympathy with and real envy of the life we were leading grew visibly as the evening advanced; and he finally left us with evident reluctance. I, for one, was shaken by the hand three times as he made for the door on three separate occasions; but each time, after hesitatingly listening to the beginning of some new adventure by one of the boys, he again sat down to hear another page from our every-day life. We even urged him to chuck all his political work and come out like the great white man he was, and join us. If he would do this, we promised to put a force under his command to organize the hunting and pioneering business of Central Africa, and perhaps make history. He was, I believe, deeply moved by this offer; and long afterwards he told a friend that no honor ever paid him had impressed and tempted him like that which he received from the poachers of the Lado Enclave."*

—*John Boyes,* Company of Adventurers

* * *

Roosevelt walked to the door of the tent, then paused and turned back to face Boyes.

"A force, you say?" he asked thoughtfully, as a lion coughed and a pair of hyenas laughed maniacally in the distance.

"That's right, Mr. President," said Boyes, getting to his feet. "I can promise you at least fifty men like ourselves. They may not be much to look at, but they'll be men who aren't afraid to work or to fight, and each and every one of them will be loyal to you, sir."

"Father, it's getting late," called Kermit from outside the tent.

"You go along," said Roosevelt distractedly. "I'll join you in a few minutes." He turned back to Boyes. "Fifty men?"

"That's right, Mr. President."

"Fifty men to tame the whole of Central Africa?" mused Roosevelt.

Boyes nodded. "That's right. There's seven of us right here; we could have the rest assembled inside of two weeks."

"It's very tempting," admitted Roosevelt, trying to suppress a guilty smile. "It would be a chance to be both a boy and a President again."

"The Congo would make one hell of a private hunting preserve, sir," said Boyes.

The American was silent for a moment, and finally shook his massive head. "It couldn't be done," he said at last. "Not with fifty men."

"No," said Boyes. "I suppose not."

"There are no roads, no telephones, no telegraph lines." Roosevelt paused, staring at the flickering lanterns that illuminated the interior of the tent. "And the railway ends in Uganda."

"No access to the sea, either," agreed Boyes pleasantly, as the lion coughed again and a herd of hippos started bellowing in the nearby river.

"No," said Roosevelt with finality. "It simply couldn't be done — not with fifty men, not with five thousand."

Boyes grinned. "Not a chance in the world."

"A man would have to be mad to consider it," said Roosevelt.

"I suppose so, Mr. President," said Boyes.

Roosevelt nodded his head for emphasis. "Totally, absolutely mad."

"No question about it," said Boyes, still grinning at the burly American. "When do we start?"

"Tomorrow morning," said Roosevelt, his teeth flashing as he finally returned Boyes' grin. "By God, it'll be bully!"

- II -

"Father?"

Roosevelt, sitting on a chair in front of his tent, continued staring through his binoculars.

"Kermit, you're standing in front of a lilac-breasted roller and a pair of crowned cranes."

Kermit didn't move, and finally Roosevelt put his binoculars down on a nearby table. He pulled a notebook out of his pocket and began scribbling furiously.

"Remarkable bird viewing here," he said as he added the roller and the cranes to his list. "That's 34 species I've seen today, and we haven't even had breakfast yet." He looked up at his son. "I love these chilly Ugandan nights and mornings. They remind me of the Yellowstone. I trust you slept well?"

"Yes, I did."

"Wonderful climate," said Roosevelt. "Just wonderful!"

"Father, I'd like to speak to you for a few moments, if I may."

Roosevelt carefully tucked the notebook back into his breast pocket. "Certainly," he replied. "What would you like to talk about?"

Kermit looked around, found another canvas chair, carried it over next to his father, and sat down on it.

"This entire enterprise seems ill-conceived, Father."

Roosevelt seemed amused. "That's your considered opinion, is it?"

"One man can't civilize a country half the size of the United States," continued Kermit. "Not even you."

"Kermit, when I was twelve years old, the best doctors in the world told me I'd always be underweight and sickly," said Roosevelt. "But when I was nineteen, I was the lightweight boxing champion of Harvard."

"I know, Father."

"Don't interrupt. People told me I couldn't write a proper sentence, but I've written twenty books, and four of them have been best-sellers. They told me that politics was no place for a young man, but when I was twenty-four I was Speaker of the House of the New York State Legislature. They told me that law and order had no place in the West, but I went out and single-handedly captured three armed killers in the Dakota Bad Lands during the Winter of the Blue Snow." Roosevelt paused. "Even my Rough Riders said we couldn't take San Juan Hill; I took it." He stared at his son. "So don't tell me what I can't do, Kermit."

"But this isn't like anything else you've done," persisted Kermit.

"What better reason is there to do it?" said Roosevelt with a delighted grin.

"But —"

"Ex-Presidents are supposed to sit around in their rocking chairs and only come out for parades. Well, I'm 51 years old, and I'm not ready to retire yet. Another opportunity like this may never come along." Roosevelt gazed off to the west, toward the Congo. "Think of it, Kermit! More than half a million square miles, filled with nothing but animals and savages and a few missionaries. The

British and French and Portuguese and Belgians and Italians all have had their chance at this continent; Africa ought to have one country developed by someone who will bring them American know-how and American democracy and American values. We're a rustic, frontier race ourselves; who better to civilize yet another frontier?" He paused, envisioning a future that was as clear to him as the present. "And think of the natural resources! We'll turn it into a protectorate, and give it favored nation trading status. There's lumber here to build thirty million houses, and where we've cleared the forests away we'll create farms and cities. It will be America all over again — only this time there will be no slavery, no genocide practiced against an indigenous people, no slaughter of the buffalo. I'll use America not as a blueprint, but as a first draft, and I'll learn from our past mistakes."

"But it *isn't* another America, Father," said Kermit. "It's a harsh, savage country, filled with hundreds of tribes whose only experience with white men is slavery."

"Then they'll be happy to find a white man who is willing to redress the balance, won't they?" replied Roosevelt with a confident smile.

"What about the legalities involved?" persisted Kermit. "The Congo is a Belgian colony."

"They've had their chance, and they've muddled it badly." Roosevelt paused. "Suppose you let *me* worry about the Belgians."

Kermit seemed about to argue the point, then realized the fruitlessness of further debate. "All right," he said with a sigh.

"Was there anything else?"

"Yes," said Kermit. "What do you know about this man Boyes?"

"The man's a true pioneer," said Roosevelt admiringly. "He should have been an American."

Kermit shook his head. "The man's a scalawag."

"That's your conclusion after being wined and dined in his tent for a single evening?"

"No, Father But while you were taking your morning walk and watching birds, I was talking to some of his companions about him. They thought they were bragging about him, and telling me stories that would impress me — but what I heard gave me a true picture of the man."

"For example?" asked Roosevelt.

"He's always in trouble — with the law, with the British army, with the Colonial Office." Kermit paused "They've tried to deport him from East Africa twice. Did you know that?"

"Certainly I know it," answered Roosevelt. Suddenly he grinned and pointed to a small book that was on the table next to his binoculars. "I spent most of the night reading his memoirs. Remarkable man!"

"Then you know that the British government arrested him for..." Kermit searched for the word.

"Dacoity?"

Kermit nodded. "Yes."

"Do you know what it means?" asked his father.

"No," admitted Kermit.

"In this particular case, it means that he signed a treaty with the Kikuyu and got them to open their land to white settlement, and some higher-up in the Colonial government felt that Mr. Boyes was usurping his authority." Roosevelt chuckled. "So they sent a squad of six men into Kikuyuland to arrest him, and they found him surrounded by five thousand armed warriors And since none of the arresting officers cared very much for the odds, Mr. Boyes volunteered to march all the way to Mombasa on his own recognizance." Roosevelt paused and grinned. "When he walked into court with his five thousand Kikuyu, the case was immediately thrown out." He laughed.

"Now, that's a story that could have come out of our own Wild West."

"There were other stories, too, Father," said Kermit. "Less savory stories."

"Good," said Roosevelt. "Then he and I will have something to talk about on the way to the Congo."

"You know, of course, that he's the so-called White King of the Kikuyu."

"And I'm an honorary Indian chief. We have a lot in common."

"You have nothing in common," protested Kermit. "You *helped* our Indians. Boyes became king through deceit and treachery."

"He walked into a savage kingdom that had never permitted a white man to enter it before, and within two years he became the king of the entire Kikuyu nation. That's just the kind of man I need for the work at hand."

"But, Father —"

"This is a harsh, savage land, Kermit, and I'm embarking on an enterprise that is neither for the timid nor the weak," said Roosevelt with finality. "He's the man I want."

"You're certain that you won't reconsider?"

Roosevelt shook his head. "The subject is closed."

Kermit stared at his father for a long moment, then sighed in defeat.

"What shall I tell Mother?"

"Edith will understand," said Roosevelt. "She has always understood. Tell her I'll send for her as soon as I've got a proper place to house us all." Suddenly he grinned again. "Maybe we should send for your sister Alice immediately. If there's any native opposition, she can terrify them into submission, just the way she used to do with my Cabinet."

"I'm being serious, Father."

"So am I, Kermit. America's never had an empire, and doesn't

want one — but I made us a world power, and if I can increase our influence on a continent where we've yet to gain a foothold, then it's my duty to do so."

"And it'll be such fun," suggested Kermit knowingly.

Roosevelt flashed his son another grin. "It will be absolutely bully!"

Kermit stared at his father for a moment. "If I can't talk you out of this enterprise, I wish you'd let me stay here with you."

Roosevelt shook his head "Someone has to make sure all the trophies we've taken get to the American Museum on schedule. Besides, if we both stay here, the press will be sure I died during the safari. You've got to go back and tell them about the work I'm doing here." Suddenly he frowned. "Oh, and you'll have to see my editor at Scribner's and tell him that I'll be a little late on the safari manuscript. I'll start working on it as soon as we set up a permanent camp." He paused again. "Oh, yes. Before you woke up this morning, I gave a number of letters to Mr. Cunninghame, who will accompany you for the remainder of the journey. I want you to mail them when you get back to the States. The sooner we get some engineers and heavy equipment over here, the better."

"Heavy equipment?"

"Certainly. We've got a lot of land to clear and a railway to build." A superb starling walked boldly up to the mess tent, looking for scraps, and Roosevelt instantly withdrew his notebook and began scribbling again.

"The Congo's in the middle of the continent," Kermit pointed out. "It will be very difficult to bring in heavy equipment from the coast."

"Nonsense," scoffed Roosevelt. "The British disassembled their steamships, transported them in pieces, and then reassembled them on Lake Victoria and Lake Nyasa. Are you suggesting that Americans, who could build the Panama Canal and crisscross an

entire continent with railroads, can't find a way to transport bulldozers and tractors to the Congo?" He paused. "You just see to it that those letters are delivered. The rest will take care of itself."

Just then Boyes approached them.

"Good morning, Mr. Boyes," said Roosevelt pleasantly. "Are we ready to leave?"

"We can break camp whenever you wish, Mr. President," said Boyes. "But one of our natives tells me there's a bull elephant carrying at least one hundred and thirty pounds a side not five miles from here."

"Really?" said Roosevelt, standing up excitedly. "Is he certain? I never saw ivory that large in Kenya."

"This particular boy's not wrong very often," answered Boyes. "He says this bull is surrounded by three or four *askaris* — young males — and that he's moving southeast. If we were to head off in *that* direction" — he pointed across the river to an expanse of dry, acacia-studded savannah — "we could probably catch up with him in a little less than three miles."

"Have we time?" asked Roosevelt, trying unsuccessfully to hide his eagerness.

Boyes smiled. "The Congo's been waiting for someone to civilize it for millions of years, Mr. President. I don't suppose another day will hurt."

Roosevelt turned to his son and shook his hand. "Have a safe trip, Kermit. If I bag this elephant, I'll have his tusks sent on after you."

"Good-bye, Father."

Roosevelt gave the young man a hug, and then went off to get his rifle.

"Don't worry, son," said Boyes, noting the young man's concern. "We'll take good care of your father. The next time you see him, he'll be the King of the Congo."

"President," Kermit corrected him.

"Whichever," said Boyes with a shrug.

- III -

It took Roosevelt six hours to catch up with his elephant, and the close stalk and kill took another hour. The rest of the day was spent removing the tusks and — at the ex-President's insistence — transporting almost three hundred pounds of elephant meat to the porters who had remained with Kermit.

It was too late to begin the trek to the Congo that day, but their little party was on the march shortly after sunrise the next morning. The savannah slowly changed to woodland, and finally, after six days, they came to the Mountains of the Moon.

"You're a remarkably fit man, Mr. President," remarked Boyes, as they made their first camp in a natural clearing by a small, clear stream at an altitude of about 6,000 feet

"A healthy mind and a healthy body go hand-in-hand, John," replied Roosevelt. "It doesn't pay to ignore either of them."

"Still," continued Boyes, "once we cross the mountains, I think we'll try to find some blooded horses to ride."

"Blooded?" repeated Roosevelt.

"Horses that have already been bitten by the tsetse fly and survived," answered Boyes. "Once they've recovered from the disease, they're immune to it. Such animals are worth their weight in gold out here."

"Where will we find them, and how much will they cost?"

"Oh, the Belgian soldiers will have some," answered Boyes easily. "And they'll cost us two or three bullets."

"I don't understand."

Boyes grinned. "We'll kill a couple of elephants and trade the ivory for the horses."

"You're a resourceful man, Mr. Boyes," said Roosevelt with an appreciative grin.

"Out here a white man's either resourceful or he's dead," answered Boyes.

"I can well imagine," replied Roosevelt. He stared admiringly at the profusion of birds and monkeys that occupied the canopied forest that surrounded the clearing. "It's beautiful up here," he commented. "Pleasant days, brisk nights, fresh air, clear running water, game all around us. A man could spend his life right here."

"*Some* men could," said Boyes. "Not men like us."

"No," agreed Roosevelt with a sigh. "Not men like us."

"Still," continued Boyes, "there's no reason why we can't spend two or three days here. We'll be meeting our party on the other side of the mountains, but they probably won't arrive for another week to ten days. It will take time for word of our enterprise to circulate through the Lado."

"Good!" said Roosevelt. "It'll give me time to catch up on my writing." He paused. "By the way, where did you plan to pitch my tent?"

"Wherever you'd like it."

"As close to the stream as possible," answered Roosevelt. "It's really quite a lovely sight to wake up to."

"No reason why not," said Boyes. "I haven't seen any crocs or hippos about." He gave a brief command to the natives, and pointed to the spot Roosevelt had indicated.

"Please make sure the American flag is stationed in front of it," said Roosevelt. "Oh, and have my books placed inside it."

"You know," said Boyes, "we're using two boys just to carry your books, Mr. President. Perhaps we could leave some of them behind when we break camp and push inland."

Roosevelt shook his head. "That's out of the question: I'd be quite lost without access to literature. If we're short of manpower, we'll

leave my rifle behind and have my gunbearer carry one of the book boxes."

Boyes smiled. "That won't be necessary, Mr. President. It was just a suggestion."

"Good," said Roosevelt with a smile. "Just between you and me, I'd feel almost as lost without my Winchester."

"You handle it very well."

"I'm just a talented amateur," answered Roosevelt. "I'm not in a class with you professional hunters."

Boyes laughed. "I'm no professional."

"You were hunting for ivory when we met."

"I was trying to increase my bank account," answered Boyes. "The ivory was just a means to an end. Karamojo Bell is a real hunter, or your friend Selous. I'm just an entrepreneur."

"Don't be so modest, John," said Roosevelt. "You managed to amass quite a pile of ivory. You couldn't do that if you weren't an expert hunter."

"Would you like to know how I actually went about collecting that ivory?" asked Boyes with a grin.

"Certainly."

"I don't know the first thing about tracking game, so I stopped at a British border post, explained that I was terrified of elephants, and slipped the border guards a few pounds to mark the major concentrations on a map of the Lado Enclave so I could avoid them."

Roosevelt laughed heartily. "Still, once you found the herds, you obviously knew what to do."

Boyes shrugged. "I just went where there was no competition."

"I thought the Enclave was filled with ivory hunters."

"Not in the shoulder-high grass," answered Boyes. "No way to sight your rifle, or to maneuver in case of a charge."

"How did you manage to hunt under such conditions?"

"I stood on my bearer's shoulders." Boyes chuckled at the memory. "The first few times I used a .475, but the recoil was so powerful that it knocked me off my perch each time I fired it, so in the end I wound up using a Lee-Enfield .303."

"You're a man of many talents, John."

A yellow-vented bulbul, bolder than its companions, suddenly landed in the clearing to more closely observe the pitching of the tents.

"Lovely bird, the bulbul," remarked Roosevelt, pulling out his notebook and entering the time and location where he had spotted it. "It has an absolutely beautiful voice, too."

"You're quite a bird-watcher, Mr. President," noted Boyes.

"Ornithology was my first love," answered Roosevelt. "I published my initial monograph on it when I was fourteen." He paused. "For the longest time, I thought my future would be in ornithology and taxidermy, but eventually I found men more interesting than animals." Suddenly he grinned. "Or at least, more in need of leadership."

"Well, we've come to the right place," replied Boyes. "I think the Congo is probably more in need of leadership than most places."

"That's what we're here for," agreed Roosevelt. "In fact, I think the time has come to begin formulating an approach to the problem. So far we've just been speaking in generalizations; we must have some definite plan to present to the men when we're fully assembled." He paused. "Let's take another look at that map."

Boyes withdrew a map from his pocket and unfolded it.

"This will never do," said Roosevelt, trying to study the map as the wind kept whipping through it. "Let's find a table."

Boyes ordered two of the natives to set up a table and a pair of chairs, and a moment later he and Roosevelt were sitting side by side, with the map laid out on the table and held in place by four small rocks.

"Where are we now?" asked Roosevelt.

"Right about here, sir," answered Boyes, pointing to their location. "The mountains are the dividing line between Uganda and the Congo. We'll have to concentrate our initial efforts in the eastern section."

"Why?" asked Roosevelt. "If we move *here*" — he pointed to a more centrally-located spot — "we'll have access to the Congo River."

"Not practical," answered Boyes. "Most of the tribes in the eastern quarter of the country understand Swahili, and that's the only native language most of our men will be able to speak. Once we get inland we'll run into more than two hundred dialects, and if they speak any civilized language at all, it'll be French, not English."

"I see," said Roosevelt. He paused to consider this information, then stared at the map again. "Now, where does the East African Railway terminate?"

"Over here," said Boyes, pointing. "In Kampala, about halfway through Uganda."

"So we'll have to extend the railway or build a road about 300 miles or more to reach a base in the eastern section of the Congo?"

"That's a very ambitious undertaking, Mr. President," said Boyes dubiously.

"Still, it will have to be done. There's no other way to bring in the equipment we'll need." Roosevelt turned to Boyes. "You look doubtful, John."

"It could take years The East African Railway wasn't called the Lunatic Line without cause."

Roosevelt smiled confidently. "They called it the Lunatic Line because only a lunatic would spend one thousand pounds per mile of track. Well, if there's one thing Americans can build, it's railroads. We'll do it for a tenth of the cost in a fiftieth of the time."

"If you extend it from Kampala, you'll have to run it over the Mountains of the Moon," noted Boyes.

"We ran railroads over the Rocky Mountains almost half a century ago," said Roosevelt, dismissing the subject. "Now, are there any major cities in the eastern sector? Where's Stanleyville?"

"Stanleyville could be on a different planet, for all the commerce it has with the eastern Congo," replied Boyes. "In fact, most of the Belgian settlements are along the Congo River" — he pointed out the river — "which, as you can see, doesn't extend to the eastern section. There are no railways, no rivers, and no roads connecting the eastern sector to the settlements." He paused. "Initially, this may very well work to our advantage, as it could be months before news of anything we may do will reach them."

"Then what *is* in the east?"

Boyes shrugged. "Animals and savages."

"We'll leave the animals alone and elevate the savages," said Roosevelt. "What's the major tribe there?"

"The Mangbetu."

"Do you know anything about them?"

"Just that they're as warlike as the Maasai and the Zulu. They've conquered most of the other tribes." He paused. "And they're supposed to be cannibals."

"We'll have to put a stop to that," said Roosevelt. He flashed Boyes another grin. "We can't have them going around eating registered voters."

"Especially Republicans?" suggested Boyes with a chuckle.

"Especially Republicans," agreed Roosevelt. He paused. "Have they had much commerce with white men?"

"The Belgians leave them pretty much alone," answered Boyes. "They killed the first few civil servants who paid them a visit."

"Then it would be reasonable to assume that they will be unresponsive to our peaceful overtures?"

"I think you could say so, yes."

"Then perhaps we can draw upon your expertise, John," said Roosevelt. "After all, Kikuyuland was also hostile to white men when you first entered it."

"It was a different situation," explained Boyes. "They were warring among themselves, so I simply placed myself and my gun at the disposal of one of the weaker clans and made myself indispensable to them. Once word got out that I had sided with them and turned the tide of battle, they knew they'd be massacred if I left, so they begged me to stay, and one by one we began assimilating the other Kikuyu clans until we had unified the entire nation." He paused. "The Mangbetu are already united, and I very much doubt that they would appreciate any interference from us." He stared thoughtfully at Roosevelt. "And there's something else."

"What?"

"I didn't enter Kikuyuland to bring them the benefits of civilization. The East African Railway needed supplies for 25,000 coolie laborers, and all I wanted to do was find a cheap source of food that I could resell I was just trying to make a living, not to change the way the Kikuyu lived " He paused. "African natives are a very peculiar lot. You can shoot their elephants, pull gold and diamonds out of their land, even buy their slaves, and they don't seem to give a damn. But once you start interfering with the way they live, you've got a real problem on your hands."

"There's an enormous difference between American democracy and European colonialism," said Roosevelt firmly.

"Let's hope the residents of the Congo agree, sir," said Boyes wryly.

"They will," said Roosevelt. "You know, John, this enterprise was initially your suggestion. If you feel this way, why have you volunteered to help me?"

"I've made and lost three fortunes on this continent," answered

Boyes bluntly. "Some gut instinct tells me that there's another one to be made in the Congo. Besides," he added with a smile, "it sounds like a bully adventure."

Roosevelt laughed at Boyes' use of his favorite term. "Well, at least you're being honest, and I can't ask for more than that. Now let's get back to work." He paused, ordering his thoughts. "It seems to me that as long as the Mangbetu control the area, it makes sense to work through them, to use them as our surrogates until we can educate *all* the natives."

"I suppose so," said Boyes "Still, we can't just walk in there, tell them that we're bringing them the advantages of civilization, and expect a friendly reception."

"Why not?" said Roosevelt confidently. "The direct approach is usually best."

"They're predisposed to dislike and distrust you, Mr. President."

"They're predisposed to dislike and distrust Belgians, John," answered Roosevelt. "They've never met an American before."

"I don't think they're inclined to differentiate between white men," said Boyes.

"You're viewing them as Democrats," said Roosevelt with a smile. "I prefer to think of them as uncommitted voters."

"I think you'd be better advised to think of them as hostile — and hungry."

"John, when I was President, I used to have a saying: Walk softly, but carry a big stick."

"I've heard it," acknowledged Boyes.

"Well, I intend to walk softly among the Mangbetu — but if worst comes to worst, we'll be carrying fifty big sticks with us "

"I wonder if fifty guns will be enough," said Boyes, frowning.

"We're not coming to slaughter them, John — merely to impress them."

"We might impress them more if we waited for some of your engineers and Rough Riders to show up."

"Time is a precious commodity," answered Roosevelt. "I have never believed in wasting it." He paused. "Bill Taft will almost certainly run for re-election in 1912. I'd like to make him a gift of the Congo as an American protectorate before he leaves office."

"You expect to civilize this whole country in six years?" asked Boyes in amused disbelief.

"Why not?" answered Roosevelt seriously. "God made the whole world in just six days, didn't He?"

- IV -

They remained in camp for two days, with Roosevelt becoming more and more restless to begin his vast undertaking. Finally he convinced Boyes to trek across the mountain range, and a week later they set up a base camp on the eastern border of the Belgian Congo.

The ex-President was overflowing with energy. When Boyes would awaken at sunrise, Roosevelt had already written ten or twelve pages, and was undergoing his daily regimen of vigorous exercise. By nine in the morning he was too restless to remain in camp, and he would take a tracker and a bearer out to hunt some game for the pot. In the heat of the day, while Boyes and the porters slept in the shade, Roosevelt sat in a canvas chair beside his tent, reading from the 60-volume library that accompanied him everywhere By late afternoon it was time for a long walk and an hour of serious bird-watching, followed by still more writing and then dinner. And always, as he sat beside the fire with Boyes and those poachers who had begun making their way to the base camp, he would speak for hours, firing them with his vision for the Congo and discussing how best to accomplish it. Then, somewhere

between nine and ten at night, everyone would go off to bed, and while the others slept, Roosevelt's tent was always aglow with lantern light as he read for another hour.

Boyes decided that if Roosevelt weren't given something substantial to do he might spontaneously combust with nervous energy. Therefore, since 33 members of his little company had already arrived, he broke camp and assumed that the remaining 15 to 20 men would be able to follow their trail.

They spent two days tracking down a large bull elephant and his young *askaris*, came away with fourteen tusks, six of them quite large, and then marched them 20 miles north to a Belgian outpost. They traded the tusks for seven blooded horses, left three of their party behind to acquire more ivory and trade it for the necessary number of horses, and then headed south into Mangbetu country.

They were quite a group. There was Deaf Banks, who had lost his hearing from proximity to repeated elephant gun explosions, but had refused to quit Africa or even leave the bush, and had shot more than 500 elephants. There was Bill Buckley, a burly Englishman who had given up his gold mine in Rhodesia for the white gold he found further north. There was Mickey Norton, who had spent a grand total of three days in cities during the past twenty years. There was Charlie Ross, who had left his native Australia to become a Canadian Mountie, then decided that the life was too tame and emigrated to Africa. There was Billy Pickering, who had already served two sentences in Belgian jails for ivory poaching, and had his own notions concerning how to civilize the Congo. There were William and Richard Brittlebanks, brothers who had found hunting in the Klondike to be too cold for their taste, and had been poaching ivory in the Sudan for the better part of a decade. There was even an American, Yank Rogers, one of Roosevelt's former Rough Riders, who had no use for the British or the Belgians, but joined up the moment he heard that his beloved Teddy was looking for

volunteers. Only the fabled Karamojo Bell, who had just killed his 962nd elephant and was eager to finally bag his thousandth, refused to leave the Lado.

It was understood from the start that Boyes was Roosevelt's lieutenant, and the few who choose to argue the point soon found out just how much strength and determination lay hidden within his scrawny, five-foot-two-inch body. After a pair of fist fights and a threatened pistol duel, which Roosevelt himself had to break up, the chain of command was never again challenged.

They began marching south and west, moving further from the border and into more heavily-forested territory as they sought out the Mangbetu. By the time a week had passed, eighteen more men had joined them.

On the eighth day they came to a large village. The huts were made of dried cattle dung, with thatched roofs, and were clustered around a large central compound.

The inhabitants still spoke Swahili, and explained that the Mangbetu territory was another two days' march to the south. Boyes had the Brittlebanks brothers shoot a couple of bushbuck and a duiker, and made a gift of the meat to the village. He promised to bring them still more meat upon their return, explaining to Roosevelt that this was a standard practice, as one never knew when one might need a friendly village while beating a hasty retreat.

Roosevelt was eager to meet the Mangbetu, and he got his wish two mornings later, shortly after sunrise, when they came upon a Mangbetu village in a large clearing by a river

"I wonder how many white men they've seen before?" said Roosevelt as a couple of hundred painted Mangbetu, some of them wearing blankets and leopardskin cloaks in the cold morning air, gathered in the center of the village, brandishing their spears and staring at the approaching party.

"They've probably eaten their fair share of Belgians," replied

Boyes. "At any rate, they'll know what a rifle is, so we'd better display them."

"They can see that we have them," answered Roosevelt. "That's enough."

"But, sir—"

"We've come to befriend them, not decimate them, John. Keep the men back here so they don't feel that we're threatening them," ordered Roosevelt.

"Mr. President, sir," protested Mickey Norton, "please listen to me. I've had experience dealing with savages. We all have. You've got to show 'em who's boss."

"They're not savages, Mr. Norton," said Roosevelt.

"Then what *are* they?"

Roosevelt grinned. "Voters." He climbed down off his horse. "They're our constituents, and I think I'd like to meet them on equal footing."

"Then you'd better take off all your clothes and get a spear."

"That will be enough, Mr. Norton," said Roosevelt firmly.

One old man, wearing a headdress made of a lion's mane and ostrich feathers, seated himself on a stool outside the largest hut, and a number of warriors immediately positioned themselves in front of him.

"Would that be the chief?" asked Roosevelt.

"Probably," said Boyes. "Once in a while, you get a real smart chief who puts someone else on the throne and disguises himself as a warrior, just in case you're here to kill him. But since the Mangbetu rule this territory, I think we can assume that he's really the headman."

"Nice headdress," commented Roosevelt admiringly. He handed his rifle to Norton. "John, leave your gun behind and come with me. The rest of you men, wait here."

"Would you like us to fan out around the village, sir?" suggested Charlie Ross.

Roosevelt shook his head. "If they've seen rifles before, it won't be necessary, and if they haven't, then it wouldn't do any good."

"Is there anything we *can* do, sir?"

"Try smiling," answered Roosevelt. "Come on, John."

They began approaching the cluster of warriors. A dog raced up, barking furiously. Roosevelt ignored it, and when it saw that it had failed to intimidate them, it lay down in the dust with an almost human expression of disappointment on its face and watched the two men walk past.

The warriors began murmuring, softly at first, then louder, and someone began beating a primal rhythm on the drum.

"The Lado is looking better and better with every step we take," commented Boyes under his breath.

"They're just people, John," Roosevelt assured him.

"With very unusual dietary habits," muttered Boyes.

"If you're worried, I can always have Yank act as my interpreter."

"I'm not worried about dying," answered Boyes. "I just don't want to go down in the history books as the man who led Teddy Roosevelt into a Mangbetu cooking pot."

Roosevelt chuckled. "If it happens, there won't be any survivors to write about it. Now try to be a little more optimistic." He looked ahead at the assembled Mangbetu. "What do you suppose would happen if we walked right up to the chief?"

"He's got a couple of pretty mean-looking young bucks standing on each side of him," noted Boyes. "I wish we had our rifles."

"We won't need them, John," Roosevelt assured him. "I was always surrounded by the Secret Service when I was President — but they never interfered with my conduct of my office."

They were close enough now to smell the various oils that the

Mangbetu had rubbed onto their bodies, and to see some of the patterns that had been tattooed onto their faces and torsos.

"Just keep smiling," answered Roosevelt. "We're unarmed, and our men are keeping their distance."

"Why do we have to smile?" asked Boyes.

"First, to show that we're happy to see them," said Roosevelt. "And second, to show them that we don't file our teeth."

The Mangbetu brandished their spears threateningly as Roosevelt reached them, but the old headman uttered a single command and they parted, allowing the two men a narrow path to the chief. When they got to within eight feet of him, however, four large bodyguards stepped forward and barred their way.

"John, tell him that I'm the King of America, and that I bring him greetings and felicitations."

Boyes translated Roosevelt's message. The chief stared impassively at him, and the four warriors did not relax their posture.

"Tell him that my country has no love for the Belgians."

Boyes uttered something in Swahili, and suddenly the old man seemed to show some interest. He nodded his head and responded.

"He says he's got no use for them either."

Roosevelt's smile broadened. "Tell him we're going to be great friends."

Boyes spoke to the chief again. "He wants to know why."

"Because I am going to bring him all the gifts of civilization, and I ask nothing in return except his friendship."

Another brief exchange followed. "He wants to know where the gifts of civilization are."

"Tell him they're too big for our small party of men to carry, but they're on their way."

The chief listened, finally flashed Roosevelt a smile, and turned to Boyes.

"He says any enemy of the Belgians is a friend of his."

Roosevelt stepped forward and extended his hand. The chief stared at it for a moment, then hesitantly held out his own. Roosevelt took it and shook it vigorously. Two of the old man's bodyguards tensed and raised their spears again, but the chief said something to them and they immediately backed off.

"I think you startled them," offered Boyes.

"A good politician always likes to press the flesh, as we say back home," responded Roosevelt. "Tell him that we're going to bring democracy to the Congo."

"There's no word for democracy in Swahili."

"What's the closest approximation?"

"There isn't one."

The chief suddenly began speaking. Boyes listened for a moment, then turned to Roosevelt.

"He suggests that our men leave their weapons behind and come join him in a feast celebrating our friendship."

"What do you think?"

"Maybe he's as friendly as he seems, but I don't think it would be a good idea just yet."

"All right," responded Roosevelt, holding his hand up to his glasses as a breeze brought a cloud of dust with it. "Thank him, tell him that the men have already eaten, but that you and I will accept his gracious invitation while our men guard the village against the approach of any Belgians."

"He says there aren't any Belgians in the area."

"Tell him we didn't see any either, but one can't be too careful in these dangerous times, and that now that we are friends, our men are prepared to die defending his village from his Belgian oppressors."

The chief seemed somewhat mollified, and nodded his acquiescence.

"Did you ever drink *pombe?*" asked Boyes, as the chief arose and invited them into his hut.

"No," said Roosevelt. "What is it?"

"A native beer."

"You know I don't imbibe stimulants, John."

"Well, Mr. President, you're going to have to learn how to imbibe very fast, or you're going to offend our host."

"Nonsense, John," said Roosevelt. "This is a democracy. Every man is free to drink what he wants."

"Since when did it become a democracy?" asked Boyes wryly.

"Since you and I were invited to partake in dinner, rather than constitute it," said Roosevelt. "Now let's go explain all the wonders we're going to bring to the Congo."

"Has it occurred to you that you ought to be speaking to the *people* about democracy, rather than to the hereditary chief?" suggested Boyes wryly.

"You've never seen me charm the opposition, John," said Roosevelt with a confident smile. He walked to the door of the hut, then lowered his head and entered the darkened interior. "Give me three hours with him and he'll be our biggest supporter."

He was wrong. It only took 90 minutes.

- V -

They spent the next two weeks marching deeper into Mangbetu territory. News of their arrival always preceded them, transmitted by huge, eight-foot drums, and their reception was always cordial, so much so that after the first four villages Roosevelt allowed all of his men to enter the villages.

By their eighth day in Mangbetu country the remainder of their party had caught up with them, bringing enough horses so that all 53 men were mounted. Boyes assigned rotating shifts to construct camps, cook, and hunt for meat, and Roosevelt spent every spare minute trying to master Swahili. He forbade anyone to speak to him

in English, and within two weeks he was able to make himself understood to the Mangbetu, although it was another month before he could discuss his visions of a democratic Congo without the aid of a translator.

"A wonderful people!" he exclaimed one night as he, Boyes, Charlie Ross and Billy Pickering sat by one of the campfires, after having enlisted yet another two thousand Mangbetu to their cause. "Clean, bright, willing to listen to new ideas. I have high hopes for our crusade, John."

Boyes threw a stone at a pair of hyenas that had been attracted by the smell of the impala they had eaten for dinner, and they raced off into the darkness, yelping and giggling.

"I don't know," he replied. "Everything's gone smoothly so far, but..."

"But what?"

"These people don't have the slightest idea what you're talking about, Mr. President," said Boyes bluntly.

"I was going to mention that myself," put in Charlie Ross.

"Certainly they do," said Roosevelt. "I spent the entire afternoon with Matapoli — that was his name, wasn't it? — and his elders, explaining how we were going to bring democracy to the Congo Didn't you see how enthused they all were?"

"There's still no word for *democracy* in Swahili," answered Boyes. "They probably think it's something to eat."

"You underestimate them, John."

"I've lived among blacks all my adult life," replied Boyes "If anything, I tend to over-estimate them."

Roosevelt shook his head. "The problem is cultural, not racial. In America, we have many Negroes who have become doctors, lawyers, scientists, even politicians. There is nothing a white man can do that a Negro can't do, given the proper training and opportunity."

"Maybe American blacks," said Billy Pickering. "But not Africans."

Roosevelt chuckled in amusement. "Just where do you think America's Negroes came from, Mr. Pickering?"

"Not from the Congo, that's for sure," said Pickering adamantly. "Maybe West African blacks are different."

"All men are pretty much the same, if they are given the same opportunities," said Roosevelt.

"I disagree," said Boyes. "I became the King of the Kikuyu, and you're probably going to become President of the Congo. You don't see any blacks becoming king or president of white countries, do you?"

"Give them time, John, and they will."

"I'll believe it when I see it."

"You may not live to see it, and I may not," said Roosevelt. "But one of these days it's going to happen. Take my word for it."

A lion coughed about a hundred yards away. Both men ignored it.

"Well, you're a very learned man, so if you say it's going to happen, then I suppose it is," said Boyes. "But I hope you're also right that I'll be dead and buried when that happy day occurs."

"You know," mused Roosevelt, "maybe I ought to urge some of our American Negroes to come over here. They could become the first generation of congressmen, so to speak."

"A bunch of your freed slaves set up shop in Liberia a few years back," noted Charlie Ross. "The first thing they did was to start rounding up all the native Liberians and sell them into slavery." He snorted contemptuously. "Some democracy."

"This will be different, Mr. Ross," responded Roosevelt. "These will be educated American politicians, who also just happen to be Negroes."

"Their heads would be decorating every village from here to the Sudan a week later," said Pickering with absolute certainty.

"The Belgians may be oppressing the natives now," added Boyes, "but as soon as they leave, it'll be back to tribal warfare as usual." He paused. "Your democracy is going to have exactly as many political parties as there are tribes, no more and no less, and no tribal member will ever vote for anyone other than a tribal brother."

"Nonsense!" scoffed Roosevelt. "If that philosophy held true, I'd never have won a single vote outside of my home state of New York."

"We're not in America, Mr. President," responded Boyes.

"I obviously have more faith in these people than you do, John."

"Maybe that's because I know them better."

Suddenly Roosevelt grinned. "Well, it wouldn't be any fun if it was *too* easy, would it?"

Boyes smiled wryly. "I think you're in for a little more fun than you bargained for."

"God put us here to meet challenges."

"Oh," said Charlie Ross. "I was *wondering* why He put us here."

"That's blasphemy, Mr. Ross," said Roosevelt sternly. "I won't hear any more of it."

The men fell silent, and a few moments later, when the fire started dying down, Roosevelt went off to his tent to read.

"He's biting off more than he can chew, John," said Billy Pickering when the ex-President was out of earshot.

"Maybe," said Boyes non-committally.

"There's no maybe about it," said Pickering. "He hasn't lived with Africans. *We* have You know what they're like."

"There's another problem, too, John," added Ross.

"Oh?" said Boyes.

"I have a feeling he thinks of us as the Rough Riders, all in for the long haul. But the long rains are coming in a couple of months, and I've got to get my ivory to Mombasa before then. So do a lot of the others."

"You're making a big mistake, Charlie," said Boyes. "He's offering us a whole country. There's not just ivory here; there's gold and silver and copper as well, and *somebody* is going to have to administer it. If you leave now, we may not let you come back."

"You'd stop me?" asked Ross, amused.

"I've got no use for deserters," answered Boyes seriously.

"I never signed any enlistment papers. How can I be a deserter?"

"You can be a deserter by leaving the President when he needs every man he can get."

"Look, John," said Ross. "If I thought there was one chance in a hundred that he could pull this off, I'd stay, no question about it. But we've all managed to accumulate some ivory, and we've had a fine time together, and we haven't had to fight the Belgians yet. Maybe it's time to think about pulling out, while we're still ahead of the game."

Boyes shook his head. "He's a great man, Charlie, and he's capable of great things."

"Even if he does what he says he's going to do, do you really want to live in the Congo forever?"

"I'll live anywhere the pickings are easy," answered Boyes. "And if you're smart, so will you."

"I'll have to think about it, John," said Ross, getting up and heading off toward his tent.

"How about you, Billy?" asked Boyes.

"I came here for just one reason," answered Pickering. "To kill Belgians. We haven't seen any yet, so I guess I'll stick around a little longer." Then he, too, got up and walked away.

The little Yorkshireman remained by the dying embers for a few more minutes, wondering just how much time Roosevelt had before everything fell apart.

- VI -

Two months into what Roosevelt termed their "bully undertaking" they finally ran into some organized resistance. To nobody's great surprise, it came not from the various tribes they had been enlisting in their project, but from the Belgian colonial government.

Despite the imminent arrival of the long rains, Roosevelt's entire party was still in the Congo, due mostly to the threats, pleadings, and promise of riches that Boyes had made when the ex-President was out of earshot.

They had made their way through a dense forest and were now camped by a winding, crododile-infested river. A dozen of the men were out hunting for ivory, and Pickering was scouting about thirty miles to the west with a Mangbetu guide, seeking a location for their next campsite. Three more members of the party were visiting large Mangbetu villages, scheduling visits from the "King of America" and arranging for word to be passed to the leaders of the smaller villages, most of whom wanted to come and listen to him speak of the wonders he planned to bring to the Congo.

Roosevelt was sitting on a canvas chair in front of his tent, his binoculars hung around his neck and a sheaf of papers laid out on a table before him, editing what he had written that morning, when Yank Rogers, clad in his trademark stovepipe chaps and cowboy stetson, approached him.

"We got company, Teddy," he announced in his gentle Texas drawl.

"Oh?"

Rogers nodded. "Belgians and they look like they're ready to declare war before lunch."

"Mr. Pickering will be heartbroken when he finds out," remarked Roosevelt wryly. He wiped some sweat from his face with a

handkerchief. "Send them away, and tell them we'll only speak to the man in charge."

"In charge of what?" asked Rogers, puzzled.

"The Congo," answered Roosevelt. "We're going to have to meet him sooner or later. Why should we march all the way to Stanleyville?"

"What if they insist?"

"How big is their party?" asked Roosevelt.

"One guy in a suit, six in uniforms," said Rogers.

"Take twenty of our men with you, and make sure they're all carrying their rifles. The Belgians won't insist."

"Right, Teddy."

"Oh, and Yank?"

The American stopped. "Yes?"

"Tell Mr. Boyes not to remove their wallets before they leave."

Rogers grinned. "That little bastard could find an angle on a baseball. You know he's taking ten percent off the top on all the ivory our men shoot?"

"No, I didn't know. Has anyone objected?"

"Not since he went up against Big Bill Buckley and gave him a whipping," laughed Wallace. "I think he's got notions of taking a percentage of every tusk that's shipped out of the Congo from now till Doomsday." He paused. "Well, I'd better round up a posse and go have a pow-wow with our visitors."

"Do that," said Roosevelt, spotting an insect that was crawling across his papers and flicking it to the ground. "And send Mr. Boyes over here. I think I'd better have a talk with him."

"If you're going to fight him, I think I can get three-to-one on you," said Rogers. "The rest of 'em never saw you take out that machine-gun nest single-handed at San Juan Hill; *I* did. Want me to put a little something down for you, Teddy?"

Roosevelt chuckled at the thought. "Maybe a pound or two,

if it comes to that. Which," he added seriously, "it won't."

Rogers went off to gather some of the men, and a few minutes later Boyes approached Roosevelt's tent.

"You wanted to see me, Mr. President?" he asked

"Yes, I did, John."

"Is it anything to do with the Belgians? Yank Rogers said you were sending them away."

"They'll be back," said Roosevelt, wiping his face once again and wondering if he'd ever experienced this much humidity anywhere in America. "Pull up a chair, John."

Boyes did so, and sat down opposite Roosevelt.

"John, Yank tells me that you've got a healthy little business going on here."

"You mean the ivory?" asked Boyes, making no attempt to conceal it.

Roosevelt nodded. "We're not here to get rich, John. We're here to turn the Congo into a democracy."

"There's no law against doing both," said Boyes.

"I strongly disapprove of it, John. It's profiteering."

"I'm not making a single shilling off the natives, Mr. President," protested Boyes. "How can that be profiteering?"

"You're making it off our own people," said Roosevelt. "That's just as bad."

"I was afraid you were going to look at it like that," said Boyes with a sigh. "Look, Mr. President, we're all for civilizing the Congo — but we're grown men, and we've got to make a living. Now, for most of them, that means ivory hunting when we're not busy befriending the natives Believe me when I tell you that if you were to forbid it, eighty percent of the men would leave."

"I believe you, John," said Roosevelt. "And I haven't stopped them from hunting ivory whenever they've had the time."

"Well, I haven't got any spare time, between running the camp

and acting as your second-in-command," continued Boyes, "so if I'm to make any money, it can't be by spending long days in the bush, hunting for ivory. So unless you see fit to pay me a salary, this seems like the most reasonable way of earning some money. It doesn't cost you anything, it doesn't cost the natives anything, and every one of our men knew the conditions before they signed on."

Roosevelt considered Boyes' argument for a moment, then nodded his consent.

"All right, John. Far be it from me to stand in the way of an entrepreneur." He paused for a moment. "But I want you to promise me one thing."

"What?"

"You'll let me know before you indulge in any other plans to get rich."

"Oh, I'm never without plans, Mr. President," Boyes assured him.

"Would you care to confide in me, then?"

"Why not?" replied Boyes with a shrug. "I've got nothing to hide." He leaned forward in his chair. "Once you start putting your railroad through here, you're going to need about ten thousand laborers. Now, I don't know if you're going to draft some workers from the local tribes, or hire a bunch of coolies from British East, or import all your labor from America — but I *do* know that ten thousand men eat a lot of food. I thought I'd set up a little trading company to deal with some of the tribes; you know, give them things they want in exchange for bags of flour and other edibles." He paused. "It'll be the same thing I did with the Kikuyu when they built the Lunatic Line, and I kept 25,000 coolies fed for the better part of two years."

"I don't want you fleecing the same people we're trying to befriend," said Roosevelt. "We're here to liberate this country, not plunder it."

"If they don't like what I have to trade, they don't have to part with

their goods," said Boyes. "And if they *do* like it, I'll undersell any competitor by fifty percent, which will save your fledgling treasury a lot of money."

Roosevelt stared at him for a long moment.

"Well?" said Boyes at last.

"John, if you can save us that much money without cheating the natives, get as rich as you like."

Boyes smiled. "I don't mind if I do, Mr. President."

"You're a remarkable man, John."

Boyes shook his head. "I'm just a skinny little guy who had to learn to use his head to survive with all these brawny white hunters."

"I understand you gave one of them quite a lesson in fisticuffs," remarked Roosevelt.

"You mean Buckley? I had no choice in the matter," answered Boyes. "If I'd let him get away with it, by next week they'd all be backing out on their bargain." Suddenly he smiled again. "I gave him a bottle of gin and helped him finish it, and by the next morning we were good friends again."

"You're in the wrong profession, John," said Roosevelt. "You should have been a politician."

"Not enough money in it," answered Boyes bluntly. "But while we're on the subject of politics, why did we run the Belgians off? Sooner or later we're going to have to deal with them."

"It's simply a matter of practicality," answered Roosevelt. "I think we gave them enough of an insult that the governor of the Congo will have to come here in person to prove that we can't get away with such behavior — and the sooner we meet with him, the sooner we can present our demands."

"What, exactly, do we plan to demand?"

"We're going to demand their complete withdrawal from the Congo, and we're going to stipulate that they must make a public

statement in the world press that they no longer have any colonial ambitions in Africa."

"You're not asking for much, are you?" said Boyes sardonically.

"The Belgians have no use for it, and it costs them a fortune to administer it." Roosevelt paused. "King Albert can go find another hunting reserve. We've got a nation to build here."

Boyes laughed in amusement. "And you think they're going to turn it over to a force of 53 men?"

"Certainly not," said Roosevelt. "They're going to turn it over to the natives who live here."

Boyes stared intently at Roosevelt. "You're serious, aren't you?"

"That *is* what we've come here for, isn't it?"

"Yes, but —"

"We have a job to do, John, and time is the one irreplaceable commodity in this world. We can't afford to waste it."

"Are you sure you're not being a little premature about this, Mr. President?" asked Boyes. "I thought we'd spend a year building a native army, and —"

"We can't win a war with the Belgians, John."

"Then what kind of pressure can you bring to bear on them?" asked Boyes, puzzled.

"We can threaten to *lose* a war with them."

Boyes frowned. "I don't think I quite understand, sir."

"You will, John," said Roosevelt confidently. "You will."

- VII -

It took the Assistant Governor of the Congo exactly seven weeks to hear of Roosevelt's summary dismissal of his district representative and to trek from Stanleyville to the American's base camp, by which time the rains had come and gone and the ex-President had enlisted not only the entire Mangbetu

nation to his cause, but seven lesser tribes as well.

Word of the Belgians' impending arrival reached camp a full week before they actually showed up — "God, I love those drums!" was Roosevelt's only comment — and Yank Rogers and the Brittlebanks brothers were sent out to greet the party and escort them back to camp.

Roosevelt ordered Boyes to send five of their men out on a two-week hunting expedition. When the little Yorkshireman asked what they were supposed to be hunting for, Roosevelt replied that he didn't much care, as long as they were totally out of communication for at least fourteen days. Boyes shrugged, scratched his head, and finally selected five of his companions at random and suggested they do a little ivory hunting far to the south for the two weeks. Since they had virtually shot out the immediate area, he received no objections.

When the Belgian party finally reached the camp, Roosevelt was waiting for them. He had had his men construct a huge table, some thirty feet long and five feet wide, and the moment they dismounted he invited them to join him and his men for lunch. The Assistant Governor, a tall, lean, ambitious man named Gerard Silva, seemed somewhat taken aback by the American's hospitality, but allowed himself and his twenty armed soldiers to be escorted to the table, where a truly magnificent feast of warthog, bushbuck, and guinea fowl awaited them.

Roosevelt's men, such as could fit on one side of the table, sat facing the west, and the Belgian soldiers were seated opposite them. The American sat at the head of the table, and Silva sat at the foot of it, thirty feet away. Under such an arrangement, private discussion between the two leaders was impossible, and Roosevelt encouraged his men to discuss their hunting and exploring adventures, though not more than half a dozen of the Belgian soldiers could speak or understand English.

Finally, after almost two hours, the meal was concluded, and

Roosevelt's men — except for Boyes — left the table one by one. Silva nodded to a young lieutenant, and the Belgian soldiers followed suit, clustering awkwardly around their horses. Then Silva stood up, walked down to Roosevelt's end of the table, and seated himself next to the American.

"I hope you enjoyed your meal, Mr. Silva," said Roosevelt, sipping a cup of tea.

"It was quite excellent, Mr...?" Silva paused "What would you prefer that I call you?"

"Colonel Roosevelt, Mr. Roosevelt, or Mr. President, as you prefer," said Roosevelt expansively

"It was an excellent meal, Mr. Roosevelt," said Silva in precise, heavily-accented English He withdrew a cigar and offered one to Roosevelt, who refused it. "A wise decision," he said. "The tobacco we grow here is decidedly inferior."

"You must be anxious to return to Belgium, then," suggested Roosevelt.

"As you must be anxious to return to America," responded Silva.

"Actually, I like it here," said Roosevelt. "But then, I don't smoke."

"A nasty habit," admitted Silva. "But then, so is trespassing."

"*Am* I trespassing?" asked Roosevelt innocently.

"Do not be coy with me, Mr. Roosevelt," said Silva. "It is most unbecoming. You have brought a force of men into Belgian territory for reasons that have not been made clear to us. You have no hunting permit, no visa, no permission to be here at all."

"Are you telling us to leave?"

"I am simply trying to discover your purpose here," said Silva. "If you have come solely for sport, I will personally present you with papers that will allow you to go anywhere you wish within the Congo. If you have come for some other reason, I demand to know what it is."

"I would rather discuss that with the governor himself," responded Roosevelt.

"He is quite ill with malaria, and may not be able to leave Stanleyville for another month."

Roosevelt considered the statement for a moment, then shook his head. "No, we've wasted enough time already. I suppose you'll simply have to take my message to him." He paused. "I suppose it doesn't make much difference. The only thing he'll do is transmit my message to King Albert."

"And what is the gist of your message, Mr. Roosevelt?" asked Silva, leaning forward intently.

"My men and I don't consider ourselves to be in Belgian territory."

Silva smiled humorlessly. "Perhaps you would like me to pinpoint your position on a map. You are indeed within the legal boundaries of the Belgian Congo."

"We know where we are, and we fully agree that we are inside the border of the Congo," answered Roosevelt. "But we don't recognize your authority here."

"Here? You mean right where we are sitting?"

"I mean anywhere in the Congo."

"The Congo is Belgian territory, Mr. Roosevelt."

Roosevelt shook his head. "The Congo belongs to its inhabitants. It's time they began determining their own future."

"That is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard," said Silva. "It has been acknowledged by all the great powers that the Congo is our colony."

"All but one," said Roosevelt.

"America acknowledges our right to the Congo."

"America has a history of opposing imperialism wherever we find it," replied Roosevelt. "We threw the British out of our own country, and we're fully prepared to throw the Belgians out of the Congo."

"Just as, when you were President, you threw the Panamanians out of Panama?" asked Silva sardonically.

"America has no imperial claim to Panama. The Panamanians have their own government and we recognize it." Roosevelt paused. "However, we're not talking about Panama, but about the Congo."

Silva stared at Roosevelt. "For whom do you speak, Mr. Roosevelt?" asked Silva. "You are no longer President, so surely you do not speak for America."

"I speak for the citizens of the Congo."

Silva laughed contemptuously. "They are a bunch of savages who have no interest whatsoever in who rules them."

"Would you care to put that to a vote?" asked Roosevelt with a smile.

"So they vote now?"

"Not yet," answered Roosevelt. "But they will as soon as they are free to do so."

"And who will set them free?"

"*We* will," interjected Boyes from his seat halfway down the table.

"*You* will?" repeated Silva, turning to face Boyes. "I've heard about you, John Boyes. You have been in trouble with every government from South Africa to Abyssinia."

"I don't get along well with colonial governments," replied Boyes.

"You don't get along well with native governments, either," said Silva. He turned to Roosevelt. "Did you know that your companion talked the ignorant natives who proclaimed him their king into selling him Mount Kenya for the enormous price of four goats?"

"Six," Boyes corrected him with a smile. "I wouldn't want it said that I was cheap."

"This is ridiculous!" said Silva in exasperation. "I cannot believe I am hearing this! Do you really propose to conquer the Belgian Congo with a force of 53 men?"

"Absolutely not," said Roosevelt pleasantly.

"Well, then?"

"First," said Roosevelt, "it is the Congo, not the Belgian Congo. Second, we don't propose to conquer it, but to liberate it. And third, your intelligence is wrong. There are only 48 men in my party."

"48, 53 — what is the difference?"

"Oh, there is a difference, Mr. Silva," said Roosevelt. He paused. "The other five are halfway to Nairobi by now."

"What do they propose to do once they get there?" asked Silva suspiciously.

"They propose to tell the American press that Teddy Roosevelt — who is, in all immodesty, the most popular and influential American of the past half century — is under military attack by the Belgian government. His brave little force is standing firm, but he can't hold out much longer without help, and if he should die while trying to free the citizens of the Congo from the yoke of Belgian tyranny, he wants America to know that he died at the hands of King Albert, who, I believe, has more than enough problems in Europe without adding this to his burden."

"You are mad!" exclaimed Silva. "Do you really think anyone will care what happens here?"

"That is probably just what the Mahdi said to Chinese Gordon at the fall of Khartoum," said Roosevelt easily. "Read your history books and you'll see what happened when the British people learned of his death."

"You are bluffing!"

"You are welcome to think so," replied Roosevelt calmly. "But in two months' time, 50,000 Americans will be standing in line to fight at my side in the Congo — and if you kill me, you can multiply that number by one hundred, and most of them will want to take the battle right to Belgium."

"This is the most preposterous thing I have ever heard!" exclaimed Silva.

Roosevelt reached into a pocket of his hunting jacket and pulled out a thick, official-looking document he had written the previous day.

"It's all here in black and white, Mr. Silva. I suggest that you deliver it to your superior as quickly as possible, because he'll want to send it on to Belgium, and I know how long these things take." He paused. "We'd like you out of the Congo in six months, so you can see that there's no time to waste."

"We are going nowhere!"

Roosevelt sighed deeply. "I'm afraid you are up against an historic inevitability," he said. "You have 20 armed men. I have 47, not counting myself. It would be suicidal for you to attack us here and now, and by the time you return from Stanleyville, I'll have a force of more than 30,000 Mangbetu plus a number of other tribes, who will not be denied their independence any longer."

"My men are a trained military force," said Silva. "Yours are a ragtag band of outcasts and poachers."

"But good shots," said Roosevelt with a confident grin. He paused again and the grin vanished. "Besides, if you succeed in killing me, you'll be the man who precipitated a war with the United States Are you quite certain you want that responsibility?"

Silva was silent for a moment. Finally he spoke.

"I will return to Stanleyville," he announced. "But I will be back. This I promise you."

"We won't be here," answered Roosevelt.

"Where will you be?"

"I have no idea — but I have every intention of remaining alive until news of what's happening here gets back to America." Roosevelt paused and smiled. "The Congo is a large country, Mr Silva. I plan to make many more friends here while awaiting Belgium's decision."

Silva got abruptly to his feet. "With this paper," he said, holding up the document, "you have signed not only your own death warrant, but the death warrant of every man who follows you."

Boyes laughed from his position halfway down the table. "Do you know how many death warrants have been issued on me? I'll just add this one to my collection." He paused, amused. "I've never had one written in French before."

"You are both mad!" snapped Silva, stalking off toward his men.

Roosevelt watched the assistant governor mount his horse and gallop off, followed by his twenty soldiers.

"I suppose we should have invited him to stay for dinner," he remarked pleasantly.

"You don't really think this is going to work, do you?" asked Boyes.

"Certainly."

"It's a lot of fancy talk, but it boils down to the fact that we're still only 53 men," said Boyes. "You'll never get the natives to go to war with the Belgians. They haven't any guns, and even if they did, we can't prepare them to fight a modern war in just six months' time."

"John, you know Africa and you know hunting," answered Roosevelt seriously, "but I know politics and I know history. The Congo is an embarrassment to the Belgians: Leopold wasted so much money here that his own government took it away from him two years ago. Furthermore, Europe is heading hell-for-leather for a war such as it has never seen before. The last thing they need is a battle with America over a piece of territory they didn't really want to begin with."

"They must want it or they wouldn't be here," said Boyes stubbornly.

Roosevelt shook his head. "They just didn't want anyone else to have it. When Africa was divided among the great powers in 1885, Belgium would have lost face if it hadn't insisted on its right to colonize the Congo, but it's been an expensive investment that has

been a financial drain and a political embarrassment for more than two decades." He paused. "And what I said about General Gordon was true. He refused to leave Khartoum, and his death eventually forced the British government to take over the Sudan when the public demanded that they avenge him." Suddenly Roosevelt grinned. "A lot more people voted for me than ever even heard of Gordon. Believe me, John, the Belgian government will bluster and threaten for a month or two, and then they'll start negotiating."

"Well, it all sounds logical," said Boyes. "But I still can't believe that a force of 53 men can take over an entire country. It's just not possible."

"Once and for all, John, we are *not* a force of 53 men," said Roosevelt. "We are a *potential* force of a million outraged Americans."

"So you keep saying. But still —"

"John, I trust you implicitly when we're stalking an elephant or a lion. Try to have an equal degree of trust in me when we're doing what *I* do best."

"I wish I could," said Boyes. "But it just *can't* be this easy."

On December 3, 1910, five months and 27 days after receiving Roosevelt's demands, the Belgian government officially relinquished all claims to the Congo, and began withdrawing their nationals.

- VIII -

"*Damn* that Taft!"

Roosevelt crumpled the telegram, which had been delivered by runner from Stanleyville, in his massive hand and threw it to the ground. The sound of his angry, high-pitched voice combined with the violence of his gesture frightened a number of birds which had

been searching for insects on the sprawling lawn, and they flew, squawking and screeching, to sanctuary in a cluster of nearby trees.

"Bad news, Mr. President?" asked Boyes.

They were staying at the house of M. Beauregard de Vincennes, a French plantation owner, some fifteen miles west of Stanleyville, on the shores of the Congo River. Three dozen of Roosevelt's men were camped out on the grounds, while the remainder were alternately hunting ivory and preparing the Lulua and Baluba, two of the major tribes in the area, for visits from Roosevelt himself.

"The man has no gratitude, no gratitude at all!" snapped Roosevelt. "I gave him the Presidency, handed it to him as a gift, and now I've offered to give him a foothold in Africa as well, and he has the unmitigated gall to tell me that he can't afford to send me the men and the money I've requested!"

"Is he sending anything at all?" asked Boyes.

"I requested ten thousand men, and he's sending six hundred!" said Roosevelt furiously. "I told him I needed at least twenty million dollars to build roads and extend the railroad from Uganda, and he's offered three million. Three million dollars for a country a third the size of the United States! *Damn* the man! J. P. Morgan may be a scoundrel and a brigand, but *he* would recognize an opportunity like this and pounce on it, I'll guarantee you that!" He paused and suddenly nodded his head vigorously. "By God, that's what I'll do! I'll wire Morgan this afternoon!"

"I thought he was your mortal enemy," remarked Boyes. "At least, that's the way it sounds whenever you mention him."

"Nonsense!" said Roosevelt. "We were on different sides of the political fence, but he's a competent man, which is more than I can say for the idiot sitting in the White House." Roosevelt grinned. "And he loves railroads. Yes, I'll wire him this afternoon."

"Are we refusing President Taft's offer, then?"

"Certainly not. We need all the manpower and money we can get.

I'll wire our acceptance, and send off some telegrams to a few sympathetic newspaper publishers telling them what short shrift we're getting from Washington. I can't put any more pressure on Taft from here, but perhaps *they* can." Roosevelt shook his head sadly. "It serves me right for putting a fool in the White House. I tell you, John, if I didn't have a job to do right here, I'd go back to the States and take the nomination away from him in 1912. The man doesn't deserve to run a second time."

Roosevelt ranted against the "fat fool" in the White House for another fifteen minutes, then retired to his room to draft his telegrams. When he emerged an hour later for lunch, he was once again his usual pleasant, vigorous, optimistic self. Boyes, Bill Buckley, Mickey Norton, Yank Rogers, and Deaf Banks were sitting at a table beneath an ancient tree, and all of them except Banks, who hadn't heard the ex-President's approach, stood up as he joined them.

"Please be seated, gentlemen," said Roosevelt, pulling up a chair. "What's on the menu for this afternoon?"

"Salad and cold guinea hen in some kind of sauce," answered Norton. "Or that's what Madame Vincennes told me, anyway."

"I love guinea fowl," enthused Roosevelt. "That will be just bully!" He paused. "Good people, Monsieur and Madame Vincennes. I'm delighted that they offered to be our hosts." He paused. "This is much more pleasant than being cooped up in those airless little government buildings in Stanleyville."

"I hear we got some bad news from your pal Bill Taft," ventured Rogers.

"It's all taken care of," answered Roosevelt, confidently tapping the pocket that held his telegrams. "The men he's sending will arrive during the rainy season, anyway — and by the time the rains are over, we'll have more than enough manpower." He looked around the table. "It's time we considered some more immediate problems, gentlemen."

"What problems did you have in mind, sir?" asked Buckley, as six black servants approached the table, bearing trays of salad and drinks.

"We've had this country for two months now," answered Roosevelt. "It's time we began doing something with it — besides decimating its elephant population, that is," he added harshly.

"Well, we could decimate the Belgians that have stayed behind," said Buckley with an amused smile. "Billy Pickering would like that."

"I'm being serious, Mr. Buckley," said Roosevelt, taking a small crust of bread from his plate and tossing it to a nearby starling, which immediately picked it up and pranced off with it. "What's the purpose of making the Belgians leave if we don't improve the lot of the inhabitants? Everywhere we've gone we've promised to bring the benefits of democracy to the Congo. I think it's time we started delivering on that promise. The people deserve no less."

"Boy!" said Norton to one of the servants. "This coffee's cold. Go heat it up."

The servant nodded, bowed, put the coffee pot back on the tray, and walked toward the kitchen building.

"I don't know how you're going to civilize them when they can't remember from one day to the next that coffee's supposed to be served hot and not warm," said Norton. "And look at the way he's loafing: it could be hot when he gets it and cold by the time he brings it here."

"The natives don't drink coffee, so it can hardly be considered important to them," answered Roosevelt.

"They don't vote, or hold trial by jury, either," offered Buckley.

"Well, if we're to introduce them to the amenities of civilization, I think that voting and jury trials come well ahead of coffee drinking, Mr. Buckley."

"They can't even read," said Buckley. "How are you going to teach them to vote?"

"I plan to set up a public school system throughout the country," said Roosevelt. "The Belgian missionaries made a start, but they were undermanned and under-financed. In my pocket is a telegram that will appear in more than a thousand American newspapers, an open appeal to teachers and missionaries to come to the Congo and help educate the populace."

"That could take years, sir," noted Boyes.

"Ten at the most," answered Roosevelt confidently.

"How will you pay 'em, Teddy?" asked Rogers. "Hell, you can't even pay *us*."

"The missionaries will be paid by their churches, of course," said Roosevelt. "As for the teachers, I suppose we'll have to pay them with land initially."

"That might not sit too well with the people whose land we're giving away," noted Rogers.

"Yank, if there's one thing the Congo abounds in, besides insects and humidity, it's land."

"You say it'll take ten years to educate them," continued Rogers. "How will you hold elections in the meantime?"

"By voice," answered Roosevelt. "Every man and woman will enter the polling place and state his or her preference. As a matter of fact, there will probably be a lot less vote fraud that way."

"Did I hear you say that women are going to vote too, Teddy?" asked Yank Rogers.

"They're citizens of the Congo, aren't they?"

"But they don't even vote back home!"

"That's going to change," said Roosevelt firmly. "Our founding fathers were wrong not to give women the right to vote, and there's no reason to make the same mistake here. They're human beings,

the same as us, and they deserve the same rights and privileges." Suddenly he grinned. "I pity the man who has to tell my Alice that she can't cast her vote at the polls There won't be enough of him left to bury!"

"You know, we could raise money with a hut tax," suggested Buckley. "That's what the British have done wherever they've had an African colony."

"A hut tax?" asked Roosevelt.

Buckley nodded. "Tax every native ten or twenty shillings a year for each hut he erects. It not only raises money for the treasury, but it forces them to be something more than subsistence farmers, since they need money to pay the tax."

Roosevelt shook his head adamantly. "We're supposed to be freeing them, Mr. Buckley, not enslaving them."

"Besides," added Boyes, "it never worked that well in British East. If they didn't pay their hut tax, the government threw them into jail." He turned to Roosevelt and smiled. "You know what the Kikuyu and Wakamba called the jail in Nairobi? The King Georgi Hoteli. It was the only place they knew of where they could get three square meals a day and a free roof over their heads." He chuckled at the memory. "Once word of it got out, they were lining up to get thrown in jail."

"Well, there will be no such attempt to exploit the natives of the Congo," said Roosevelt. "We must always remember that this is *their* country and that our duty is to teach them the ways of democracy."

"That may be easier said than done," said Rogers.

"Why should you think so, Yank?" asked Roosevelt.

"Democracy's a pretty alien concept to them," answered Rogers. "It's going to take some getting used to."

"It was an alien concept to young Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver, too," said Roosevelt, "but they seem to

have adapted to it readily enough. It's never difficult to get used to freedom."

"We ain't talking freedom, Teddy," said Rogers. "They were free for thousands of years before the Belgians showed up, but they ain't never had a democracy. Their tribes are ruled by chiefs and witch doctors, not congressmen."

"And now that the Belgians are clearing out," added Norton, "our biggest problem is going to be to stop them from killing each other long enough to get to the polls."

"All of you keep predicting the most dire consequences," said Roosevelt irritably, "and yet you ignore the enormous strides the American Negro has taken since the Emancipation Proclamation. I tell you, gentleman, that freedom has no color and democracy is not the special province of one race."

Boyes smiled, and Buckley turned to him.

"What are you looking so amused about, John? You've been here long enough to know everything we've said is the truth."

"You all think you're discouraging Mr. Roosevelt, and that if you tell him enough stories about how savage the natives are, maybe you'll convince him to join you long enough to kill every last elephant in the Congo and then go back to Nairobi." Boyes paused. "But I know him a little better than you do, and if there's one thing he can't resist, it's a challenge." He turned to Roosevelt. "Am I right, sir?"

Roosevelt grinned back at him. "Absolutely, Mr. Boyes." He looked around at his companions. "Gentlemen," he announced, "I've heard enough doomsaying for one day. It's time to roll up our sleeves and get to work."

- IX -

Roosevelt stared at his image in the full-length ornate gilt mirror

that adorned the parlor of the state house at Stanleyville, and adjusted the tie of his morning suit.

"Good thing that little German tailor decided not to leave," he remarked to Boyes, who was similarly clad, "or we'd be conducting matters of state in our safari clothes."

"I'd be a damned sight more comfortable in them," replied Boyes, checking his appearance in the mirror, and deciding that his hair needed more combing.

"Nonsense, John," said Roosevelt. "We've got reporters and photographers from all over the world here."

"Personally, I'd much rather face a charging elephant," said Boyes, looking out the window. "I don't like crowds."

Roosevelt smiled. "I'd forgotten just how much I *miss* them." He put on his top hat and walked to the door. "Well, we might as well begin."

Boyes, unhappy and uncomfortable, and feeling quite naked without his pistol and rifle, followed the American out the front door to the raised wooden platform that had been constructed in front of the state house the previous day. The press was there, as Roosevelt had said· reporters and photographers from America, Belgium, England, France, Italy, Portugal, Kenya, and even a pair of Orientals had made the long, arduous trek to Stanleyville to hear this speech and record the moment for posterity. Seated on the front row of chairs, in a section reserved for VIPs and dignitaries, were the paramount chiefs of the Mangbetu, the Simba, the Mongo, the Luba, the Bwaka, the Zande, and the Kongo (which centuries ago had given the country its name). There was even a pair of pygmy chiefs, one who whom was completely naked except for a loincloth, a pair of earrings, and a necklace made of leopards' claws, while the other wore a suit that could have been tailored on Savile Row.

The crowd, some six hundred strong, and divided almost equally between whites and black Africans, immediately ceased its

chattering when Roosevelt mounted the platform and waited in polite expectation while he walked to a podium and pulled some notes out of his pocket.

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I thank you for your attendance and patience. I realize that, with our transportation system not yet constructed, you may have had some slight difficulty in reaching Stanleyville" — he paused for the good-natured laughter that he knew would follow — "but you're here now, and we're delighted to have you as the guests of our new nation."

He paused, pulled a brand-new handkerchief out of his pocket, and wiped away the sweat that had begun pouring down his face

"We are here to proclaim the sovereignty of this beautiful land. Some years ago it was known as the Congo Free State. At the time, that was a misnomer, for it was anything but free Today it is no longer a misnomer, and so it shall once again be known as the Congo Free State, an independent nation dedicated to the preservation of human dignity and the celebration of human endeavor."

A pair of blue turracoes began shrieking in a nearby tree, and he smiled and waited a few seconds until the noise had subsided.

"What's past is past," he continued, "and the Congo Free State begins life with a clean slate. It bears no rancor toward any person or any nation that may have exploited its resources and its people in the past. But" — and here Roosevelt's chin jutted out pugnaciously — "this land will never be plundered or exploited again." He stared darkly out at his audience. "Never again will a privileged minority impose its will upon the majority. Never again will one tribe bear arms against another. Never again will women do most of the work and reap none of the benefits. And never again will the dreadful spectres of ignorance, poverty and disease run rampant in what Henry Stanley termed Darkest Africa." He raised his voice dramatically. "From this day forward, we shall illuminate the

Congo Free State with the light of democracy, and turn it into the exemplar of Brightest Africa!"

Roosevelt paused long enough for his words to be translated, then smiled and nodded as the row of chiefs rose to their feet and cheered wildly, followed, somewhat less enthusiastically, by the Europeans.

"Thank you, my friends," he continued when the chiefs finally sat down. "We who have been fortunate enough to help in the birth of the Congo Free State have great plans for its future." He smiled triumphantly. "Great plans, indeed!" he repeated emphatically.

"Within two years, we will extend the East African Railway from its present terminus in Uganda all the way to Stanleyville, and within another year to Leopoldville. This will give us access to the Indian Ocean, as the Congo River gives us access to the Atlantic, and with the modern farming methods we plan to introduce, we will shortly be shipping exports in great quantity to both coasts."

There was more applause, a little less rabid this time, as most of the chiefs had only the haziest understanding of an economy that extended beyond their own tribes.

"We will construct public schools throughout the country," Roosevelt added. "Our goal is nothing less than 100% literacy by the year 1930."

This time the applause came only from the chiefs, as the whites in the audience looked openly skeptical.

"We will soon begin the construction of modern hospitals in every major city in the Congo Free State," continued Roosevelt, "and no citizen shall ever again want for medical care. American engineers will build dams the length of the Congo River, so that we can generate all the electricity that a modern nation will need. While leaving vast tracts of land untouched as national parks and game reserves, we will nonetheless criss-cross the country with a network of roads, so that no village, no matter how remote, remains inaccessible."

He paused and glared at the disbelieving white faces in his audience.

"We will do everything I have said," he concluded. "And we will do it sooner than you think!"

The assembled chiefs began cheering and jumping around in their enthusiasm, and the remainder of the audience, sensing that he had concluded the major part of his address, applauded politely.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, if you will all rise, we will, for the very first time, raise the flag of the Congo Free State." He turned to Boyes. "Mr. Boyes?"

Boyes withdrew the folded flag that he had been carrying inside his morning coat, waited for an honor guard of khaki-clad native soldiers to approach, and solemnly handed the flag over to their leader. The soldiers then marched to a recently-erected flagpole near the platform, and began raising a banner that depicted the colorful shields of twenty of the major tribes arranged in a pattern on a field of green, while Yank Rogers, who had been unable to create a national anthem on two days notice, played a military march on his ancient bugle. Roosevelt stood at attention and saluted, Boyes and the chiefs followed suit, and the reporters, politicians, and dignitaries were quick to rise to their feet as well.

When the flag had been raised and the rope secured at the base of the flagpole, Roosevelt faced the crowd once more.

"I have been selected, by the unanimous consent of the tribes that are represented here today, to draft and implement a democratic constitution for the Congo Free State. During this time I shall hold the office of Chief Administrator, an office that will be abolished when the first national election is held one year from today. At that time all the people of the Congo Free State, regardless of race or gender, will choose their own President and legislature, and their destiny will finally be in their own hands."

He stared out at the audience.

"I thank you for your attendance at this historic ceremony. Lunch will be provided for everyone on the lawn, and I will be available for interviews throughout the afternoon."

He climbed down from the platform to one last round of applause, finally allowed them a look at the famed Roosevelt grin, waited for Boyes to join him, and disappeared into the interior of the state house.

"How was I, John?" he asked anxiously.

"I thought you were excellent, Mr. President," answered Boyes truthfully.

"Mr. Chief Administrator, you mean," Roosevelt corrected him. Suddenly he smiled "Although by this time you certainly know me well enough to call me Teddy. Everyone else does."

"I think I prefer Mr. President," replied Boyes. "I'm used to it."

Roosevelt shrugged, then looked out the window as the crowd began lining up at the long buffet tables.

"They don't think I can do it, do they, John?"

"No, sir, they don't," answered Boyes honestly.

"Well, they'd be correct if I applied their outmoded methods," said Roosevelt. He drew himself up to his full height. "However, this is a new century. We have new technologies, new methods, and new outlooks."

"But this is an old country," said Boyes.

"What is that supposed to mean, John?"

"Just that it might not be ready for your new approach, Mr. President."

"You saw the chiefs out there, John," said Roosevelt. "They're my strongest supporters."

"It's in their best interest to be," said Boyes. "After all, you've promised them the moon."

"And I'll deliver it," said Roosevelt resolutely.

- X -

Boyes walked into the state house and was ushered into Roosevelt's office.

"Where have you been, John?" asked Roosevelt. "I expected you back three days ago."

"It took a little longer than I thought to set up my trading company," answered Boyes. "But if your laborers ever arrive, at least they won't starve to death. I've got commitments for flour and meat."

"What are you trading for them?"

"Iodine," answered Boyes. "That's what took me so long. My shipment was late arriving from Nairobi."

"Iodine?" repeated Roosevelt, curious.

Boyes smiled. "There are some infections even a witch doctor can't cure." He sat down in a leather chair opposite Roosevelt's desk, looking quite pleased with himself "An ounce of iodine for thirty pounds of flour or one hundred pounds of meat."

"That's immoral, John. Those people *need* that medication."

"Our people will need that food," answered Boyes.

"My hospitals will put you out of business," said Roosevelt sternly. "We will never withhold treatment despite a patient's inability to pay for it."

"When you build your hospitals, I'll find something else to trade them," said Boyes with a shrug. He decided to change the subject. "I hear you held your first local election while I was gone. How did it go?"

"I would call it a limited success."

"Oh?"

"It was a trial run, so to speak," said Roosevelt. "We selected a district at random and tried to show them how an election works." He paused. "We had a turnout of almost ninety percent, which is certainly very promising."

"Let me guess about the unpromising part," said Boyes. "Your candidates didn't get a single crossover vote."

Roosevelt nodded his head grimly. "The vote went one hundred percent along tribal lines."

"I hope you're not surprised."

"No, but I *am* disappointed." Roosevelt sighed. "I'll simply have to keep explaining to them that they are supposed to vote on the issues and not the tribal connections until they finally understand the principle involved."

For the first time since they had met, Boyes felt sorry for the American.

* * *

"Not guilty?" repeated Roosevelt. "How in the name of pluperfect hell could they come in with a verdict of not guilty?"

He had turned the local theater into a court room, and had spent the better part of a week instructing the members of the Luba and Zande tribe in the intricacies of the jury system. Then he himself had acted as the presiding judge at the Congo Free State's very first trial by jury, and he was now in his makeshift chambers, barely able to control his fury.

"It was a unanimous decision," said Charlie Ross, who had acted as bailiff.

"I know it was a unanimous decision, Mr. Ross!" thundered Roosevelt. "What I don't know is how, in the face of all the evidence, they could come up with it?"

"Why don't you ask them?" suggested Ross.

"By God, that's exactly what I'll do!" said Roosevelt. "Bring them in here, one at a time."

Ross left the room for about five minutes, during which time Roosevelt tried unsuccessfully to compose himself.

"Sir," said Ross, re-entering in the company of a tall, slender black man, "this is Tambika, one of the jurors."

"Thank you, Mr. Ross," said Roosevelt. He turned to the African. "Mr. Tambika," he said in heavily-accented Swahili, "I wonder if you could explain your decision to me."

"Explain it, King Teddy?" asked Tambika, bewildered.

"Please call me Mr. Chief Administrator," said Roosevelt uncomfortably. He paused. "The man, Toma, was accused of stealing six cows. Four eyewitnesses claimed to see him driving the cows back toward his own home, and Mr. Kalimi showed you a bill of sale he received when he purchased the cows from Toma. There is no question that the cows bore the mark, or brand, of the plaintiff, Mr. Salamaki. Can you please tell me why you found him innocent?"

"Ah, now I understand," said Tambika with a large smile. "Toma owes me money. How can he pay me if he is in jail?"

"But he broke the law."

"True," agreed Tambika.

"Then you must find him guilty."

"But if I had found him guilty, he would never be able to pay me what he owes me," protested Tambika. "That is not justice, King Teddy."

Roosevelt argued with Tambika for another few minutes, then dismissed him and had Ross bring in the next juror, an old man named Begoni. After reciting the evidence again, he put the question to the old man.

"It is very clear," answered Begoni. "Toma is a Luba, as am I. Salamaki is a Zande. It is impossible for the Luba to commit a crime against the Zande."

"But that is precisely what he did, Mr. Begoni," said Roosevelt.

The old man shook his head. "The Zande have been stealing our

cattle and our women since God created the world. It is our right to steal them back."

"The law says otherwise," Roosevelt pointed out.

"Whose law?" asked the old man, staring at him with no show of fear or awe. "Yours or God's?"

"If Mr. Toma were a Zande, would you have found him guilty?"

"Certainly," answered Begoni, as if the question were too ridiculous to consider.

"If Mr. Toma were a Zande and you knew for a fact that he had *not* stolen the cattle, would you have found him innocent?" asked Roosevelt.

"No."

"Why?" asked Roosevelt in exasperation.

"There are too many Zande in the world."

"That will be all, Mr. Begoni."

"Thank you, Mr. Teddy," said the old man, walking to the door. He paused for a moment just before leaving. "I like jury trials," he announced. "It saves much bloodshed."

"I can't believe it!" said Roosevelt, getting to his feet and stalking back and forth across the room after the door had closed behind Begoni. "I spent an entire week with these people, explaining how the system works!"

"Are you ready for the next one, sir?" asked Ross

"No!" snapped Roosevelt. "I already know what he'll say. Toma's a tribal brother. Toma can't pay the bride price for his daughter if we throw him in jail. If a document, such as a bill of sale, implicates a Luba, then it must have been cursed by a Zande witch doctor and cannot be believed." Roosevelt stopped and turned to Ross. "What is the matter with these people, Charlie? Don't they understand what I'm trying to do for them?"

"They have their own system of justice, Mr. President," answered Ross gently.

"I've seen that system in action," said Roosevelt contemptuously. "A witch doctor touches a hot iron to the accused's tongue. If he cries out, he's guilty; if he doesn't, he's innocent. What kind of system is that, I ask you?"

"One they believe in," said Ross.

* * *

"Well, that's that," said Roosevelt grimly, after opening the weekly mail. "Morgan isn't interested in investing in a railroad."

"Is there anyone else you can ask?" inquired Boyes.

"Bill Taft is mismanaging the economy. I have a feeling that the people who can afford to invest are feeling exceptionally conservative this year."

Nevertheless, he wrote another thirty letters that afternoon, each soliciting funds, and mailed them the next morning. He expressed great confidence that the money would soon be forthcoming, but he began making contingency plans for the day, not far off, when construction of the Trans-Congo Railway would be forced to come to a halt.

* * *

"What do you mean, you have no more supplies?" demanded Roosevelt. "You had ample track for another five miles, Mr. Brody."

Brody, a burly American, stood uncomfortably before Roosevelt's desk, fidgeting with his pith helmet, which he held awkwardly in his huge hands.

"Yes, we did, Mr. Roosevelt."

"Well?"

"It's the natives, sir," said Brody. "They keep stealing it."

"Rubbish! What possible use could they have for steel track?"

"You wouldn't believe the uses they put it to, sir," answered Brody. "They use it to support their huts, and to make pens for their goats and cattle, and they melt it down for spearheads."

"Well, then, take it back."

"We were expressly instructed not to harm any of the natives, sir, and whenever we've tried to retrieve our tracks we've been threatened with spears, and occasionally even guns. If we can't take them back by force, they're going to stay right where they are until they rust."

"Who's the headman in your area, Mr. Brody?" asked Roosevelt.

"A Mangbetu named Matapoli."

"I know him personally," said Roosevelt, his expression brightening. "Bring him here and perhaps we can get this situation resolved."

"That could take six weeks, sir — and that's assuming he'll come with me."

Roosevelt shook his head. "That won't do, Mr. Brody. I can't pay your men to sit on their hands for six weeks." He paused, then nodded to himself, his decision made. "I'll return with you. It's time I got out among the people again, anyway."

He summoned Yank Rogers while Brody was getting lunch at a small restaurant down the street.

"What can I do for you, Teddy?" asked the American.

"I'm going to have to go to Mangbetu country, Yank," answered Roosevelt. "I want you and Mr. Buckley to remain in Stanleyville and keep an eye on things here while I'm gone."

"What about Boyes?" asked Rogers. "Isn't that his job?"

"John will be accompanying me," answered Roosevelt. "The Mangbetu seem to be very fond of him."

"They're equally fond of you, Teddy."

"I enjoy his company," said Roosevelt. He smiled wryly. "I'll also

find it comforting to know that the state house hasn't been sold to the highest bidder in my absence."

* * *

"John," remarked Roosevelt, as he and Boyes sat beside a campfire, "have you noticed that we haven't seen any elephant sign in more than a week now?"

The horses started whinnying as the wind brought the scent of lion and hyena to them.

"Perhaps they've migrated to the west," said Boyes.

"Come on, John," said Roosevelt. "I'm not as old a hand at this as you are, but I know when an area's been shot out."

"We've shipped a lot of ivory to Mombasa and Zanzibar during the past year," said Boyes.

"I didn't mind our men making a little money on the side, John, but I won't have them decimating the herds."

"They've been more than a year without a paycheck," answered Boyes seriously. "If you tell them they have to stop hunting ivory, I doubt that more than a dozen of them will stay in the Congo."

"Then we'll have to make do without their services," said Roosevelt. "The elephants belong to the people of the Congo Free State now. We've got to start a game department and charge for hunting licenses while there's still something left to hunt."

"If you say so," replied Boyes.

Roosevelt stared long and hard at him. "Will *you* be one of the ones who leaves, John?"

Boyes shook his head. "I'm the one who talked you into this in the first place, Mr. President," he answered. "I'll stay as long as you do." He paused thoughtfully. "I've made more than my share of money off the ivory anyway, and I suppose we really ought to stop

while there are still some elephants left. I was just pointing out the consequences of abolishing poaching."

"Then start passing the word as soon as we get back," said Roosevelt. Suddenly he frowned. "That's funny."

"What is, sir?"

"I felt very dizzy for just a moment there." He shrugged. "I'm sure it will pass."

But it didn't, and that night the ex-President came down with malaria. Boyes tended to him and nursed him back to health, but another week had been wasted, and Roosevelt had the distinct feeling that he didn't have too many of them left to put the country on the right track.

* * *

"Ah, my friend Johnny — and King Teddy!" Matapoli greeted them with a huge smile of welcome. "You honor my village with your presence."

"Your village has changed since the last time we were here," noted Boyes wryly.

Matapoli pointed proudly to the five railroad coach cars that his men had dragged miles through the bush over a period of months, and which now housed his immediate family and the families of four of the tribe's elders.

"Oh, yes," he said happily. "King Teddy promised us democracy, and he kept his promise." He pointed to one of the cars. "*My* democracy is the finest of all. Come join me inside it."

Roosevelt and Boyes exchanged ironic glances and followed Matapoli into the coach car, which was filled with some twenty or so of his children.

"King Teddy has returned!" enthused the Mangbetu chief. "We must have a hunt in the forest and have a feast in your honor."

"That's very thoughtful of you, Matapoli," said Roosevelt. "But it has been many months since we last saw each other. Let us talk together first."

"Yes, that would be very good," agreed Matapoli, puffing out his chest as the children recognized the two visitors and raced off to inform the rest of the village.

"Just how many children do you have?" asked Roosevelt.

Matapoli paused in thought for a moment. "Ten, and ten more, and then seven," he answered.

"And how many wives?"

"Five."

The puritanical American tried without success to hide his disapproval. "That's a very large family, Matapoli."

"Should be more, should be more," admitted the Mangbetu. "But it took many months to bring the democracies here."

"Had you left them on the track, you could have traveled all across the country on them," Boyes pointed out.

Matapoli threw back his head and laughed. "Why should I want to go to Lulua or Bwaka country?" he asked. "They would just kill me and take my democracies for themselves."

"Please try to understand, Matapoli," said Roosevelt. "There are no longer Mangbetu or Lulua or Bwaka countries. There is just the Congo Free State, and you all live in it."

"You are king of all the countries, King Teddy," answered Matapoli. "You need have no fear. If the Bwaka say that you are not king, then we shall kill them."

Roosevelt spent the next ten minutes trying to explain the Congo Free State to Matapoli, who was no closer to comprehending it at the end of the discussion than at the beginning.

"All right," said the American with a sigh of resignation. "Let's get back to talking about the trains."

"Trains?" repeated Matapoli.

"The democracies, and the steel logs they rolled upon," interjected Boyes.

"Another gift from King Teddy," said Matapoli enthusiastically. "No longer can the leopards and the hyenas break through the thorns and kill my cattle. Now I use the metal thorns, and my animals are safe."

"The metal thorns were built so that you and the other Mangbetu could travel many miles without having to walk," said Roosevelt.

"Why should we wish to go many miles?" asked Matapoli, honestly puzzled "The river runs beside the village, and the forest and its game are just a short walk away."

"You might wish to visit another tribe."

Matapoli smiled. "How could we sneak up on our enemies in the democracies? They are too large, and they would make too much noise when they rolled upon the iron thorns." He shook his head. "No, King Teddy, they are much better right here, where we can put them to use."

Long after the feast was over and Roosevelt and Boyes were riding their horses back toward Stanleyville, Roosevelt, who had been replaying the frustrating day over and over in his mind, finally sighed and muttered: "By God, that probably *is* the best use they could have been put to!"

Boyes found the remark highly amusing, and burst into laughter A moment later Roosevelt joined him with a hearty laugh of his own, and that was the official end of the Trans-Congo Railway.

* * *

They came to a newly-paved road when they were fifteen miles out of Stanleyville and, glad to finally be free of the bush and the forest, they veered their mounts onto it. As they continued their

journey, they passed dozens of men and women walking alongside the road.

"Why don't they walk *on* it, John?" asked Roosevelt curiously. "There can't be fifteen trucks in the whole of the Congo. Until we import some more, we might as well put the roads to some use."

"They're barefoot," Boyes pointed out.

"So what? The road is a lot smoother than the rocks alongside it."

"It's also a lot hotter," answered Boyes. "By high noon you could fry an egg on it."

"You mean we've spent a million dollars on roads for which there not only aren't any cars and trucks, but that the people can't even walk on?"

"This isn't America, sir."

"A point that is being driven home daily," muttered Roosevelt wearily.

- XI -

Roosevelt sat at his desk, staring at a number of letters and documents that lay stacked neatly in front of him. To his left was a photograph of Edith and his children, to his right a picture of himself delivering a State of the Union address to the United States Congress, and behind him, on an ornate brass stand, was the flag of the Congo Free State.

Finally, with a sigh, he opened the final letter, read it quickly, and, frowning, placed it atop the stack.

"Bad news, Mr. President?" asked Boyes, who was sitting in the leather chair on the opposite side of the desk.

"No worse than the rest of them," answered Roosevelt. "That was from Mr. Bennigan, our chief engineer on the Stanley Falls Bridge. He sends his regrets, but his men haven't been paid in three weeks, and he's going to have to pull out." He stared at the letter. "There's

no postmark, of course, but I would guess that it took at least two weeks to get here."

"We didn't need him anyway," said Boyes, dismissing the matter with a shrug. "What's the sense of building a bridge over the falls if we don't have any trains or cars?"

"Because someday we'll have them, John, and when we do, they're going to need roads and tracks and bridges."

"When that happy day arrives, I'm sure we'll have enough money to complete work on the bridge," replied Boyes

Roosevelt sighed. "It's not as devastating a blow as losing the teachers. How many of them have left?"

"Just about all."

"Damn!" muttered Roosevelt. "How can we educate the populace if there's no one to teach them?"

"With all due respect, sir, they don't need Western educations," said Boyes. "You're trying to turn them into Americans, and they're not. Reading and writing are no more important to them than railroads are."

Roosevelt stared at him for a long moment. "What do *you* think is important to them, John?"

"You're talking about a primitive society," answered Boyes. "They need to learn crop rotation and hygiene and basic medicine far more than they need roads that they'll never use and railroad cars that they think are simply huts on wheels."

"You're wrong, John," said Roosevelt adamantly. "A little black African baby is no different than a little black American baby — or a little white American baby, for that matter. If we can get them young enough, and educate them thoroughly enough..."

"I don't like to contradict you, sir," interrupted Boyes, "but you're wrong. What's the point of having ten thousand college graduates if they all have to go home to their huts every night because there aren't two hundred jobs for educated men in the whole country? If

you want to have a revolution on your hands, raise their expectations, prepare them to live and function in London or New York — and then make them stay in the Congo."

Roosevelt shook his head vigorously. "If we did things your way, these people would stay in ignorance and poverty forever. I told you when we began this enterprise that I wasn't coming here to turn the Congo into my private hunting preserve." He paused. "I haven't found the key yet, but if anyone can bring the Congo into the 20th Century, I can."

"Has it occurred to you that perhaps no one can?" suggested Boyes gently.

"Not for a moment," responded Roosevelt firmly.

"I'll stay as long as you do, sir," said Boyes. "You know that. But if you don't come up with some answers pretty soon, we may be the last two white men in this country, except for the missionaries and some of the Belgian planters who stayed behind. Almost half our original party has already left."

"They were just here for ivory or adventure," said Roosevelt dismissively. "We need people who care about this country more than we need people who are here merely to plunder it." Suddenly he stared out the window at some fixed point in space.

"Are you all right, sir?" asked Boyes after Roosevelt had remained motionless for almost a minute.

"Never better," answered the American suddenly. "You know, John, I see now that I've been going about this the wrong way. No one cares as much for the future of the Congo as the people themselves. I was wrong to try to bring in help from outside; in the long run, any progress we make here will be much more meaningful if it's accomplished by our own efforts."

"Ours?" repeated Boyes, puzzled. "You mean yours and mine?"

"I mean the citizens of the Congo Free State," answered Roosevelt. "I've been telling you and the engineers and the teachers

and the missionaries what they need. I think it's about time I told the people and rallied them to their own cause."

"We've already promised them democracy," said Boyes. "And there's at least one Mangbetu village that will swear we delivered it to them," he added with a smile.

"Those were politicians' promises, designed to get our foot in the door," said Roosevelt. "Democracy may be a right, but it isn't a gift. It requires effort and sacrifice. They've got to understand that."

"First they've got to understand what democracy means."

"They will, once I've explained it to them," answered Roosevelt.

"You mean in person?" asked Boyes.

"That's right," said Roosevelt. "I'll start in the eastern section of the country, now that my Swahili has become fluent, and as I move west I'll use translators But I'm going to go out among the people myself. I'm certainly not doing any good sitting here in Stanleyville; it's time to go out on the stump and get my message across to the only people who really need to understand it." He paused. "I'd love to have your company, John, but there are so few of us left that I think it would be better for you to remain here and keep an eye on things."

"Whatever you say, Mr. President," replied Boyes. "When will you leave?"

"Tomorrow," said Roosevelt. He paused. "No. This afternoon. There's nothing more important to do, and we've no time to waste."

* * *

He went among the people for five weeks, and everywhere he stopped, the drums had anticipated his arrival and the tribes flocked to see him.

He took his time, avoided any hint of jingoism, and carefully explained the principles of democracy to them. He pointed out the

necessity of education, the importance of modern farming methods, the need to end all forms of tribalism, and the advantages of a monied economy. At the end of each "town meeting", as he called them, he held a prolonged question-and-answer session, and then he moved on to the next major village and repeated the entire procedure again.

During the morning of his thirty-sixth day on the stump, he was joined by Yank Rogers, who rode down from Stanleyville to see him.

"Hello, Yank!" cried Roosevelt enthusiastically as he saw the American riding up to his tent, which had been pitched just outside of a Lulua village.

"Hi, Teddy," said Rogers, pulling up his horse and dismounting. "You're looking good. Getting out in the bush seems to agree with you."

"I feel as fit as a bull moose," replied Roosevelt with a smile. "How's John doing?"

"Getting rich, as usual," said Rogers, not without a hint of admiration for the enterprising Yorkshireman. "I thought he was going to be stuck with about a million pounds of flour when all the construction people pulled out, but he heard that there was a famine in Portuguese Angola, so he traded the flour for ivory, and then had Buckley and the Brittlebanks brothers cart it to Mombasa when they decided to call it quits, in exchange for half the profits."

"That sounds like John, all right," agreed Roosevelt. "I'm sorry to hear that we've lost Buckley and the others, though."

Rogers shrugged. "They're just Brits. What the hell do they know about democracy? They'd slit your throat in two seconds flat if someone told them that it would get 'em an audience with the King." He paused. "All except Boyes, anyway. He'd find some way to put the King on display and charge money for it."

Roosevelt chuckled heartily. "You know, I do believe you're right."

"So much for Mr. Boyes," said Rogers. "How's your campaign going?"

"Just bully," answered Roosevelt. "The response has been wildly enthusiastic." He paused. "I'm surprised news of it hasn't reached you."

"How could it?" asked Rogers. "There aren't any radios or newspapers — and even if there were, these people speak 300 different languages and none of 'em can read or write."

"Still," said Roosevelt, "I've made a start."

"I don't doubt it, sir."

"I'm drawing almost five hundred natives a day," continued Roosevelt. "That's more than 15,000 converts in just over a month."

"If they stay converted."

"They will."

"Just another six million to go," said Rogers with a chuckle.

"I'm sure they're passing the word."

"To their fellow tribesmen, maybe," answered Rogers. "I wouldn't bet on their talking to anyone else."

"You sound like a pessimist, Yank," said Roosevelt.

"Pessimism and realism are next-door neighbors on this continent, Teddy," said Rogers.

"And yet you stay," noted Roosevelt.

Rogers smiled. "I figure if anyone can whip this country into shape, it's you — and if you do, I want to be able to laugh at all those Brits who gave up and left."

"Well, stick around," said Roosevelt. "I'm just getting warmed up."

"Sounds like fun," said Rogers. "I haven't heard you rile up a crowd since you ran for Governor of New York. I was in Africa before you ran for President." Suddenly he reached into his shirt

pocket and withdrew an envelope. "I almost forgot why I rode all this way," he said, handing it to Roosevelt.

"What is it?"

"A letter from Boyes," answered Rogers. "He said to deliver it to you personally."

Roosevelt opened the letter, read it twice, then crumpled it into a ball and stuffed it into a pocket.

"I'm afraid you're not going to be able to hear me giving any speeches this week, Yank," he announced. "I've got to return to Stanleyville."

"Something wrong?"

Roosevelt nodded. "It seems that Billy Pickering found four Belgian soldiers in a remote area in the southwest, men who had never received word that the Belgians had withdrawn from the Congo, and shot them dead."

"You mean he had me ride all the way here just for that?" demanded Rogers.

"It's a matter of vital importance, Yank."

"What's so important about four dead men?" asked Rogers "Life is cheap in Africa."

"The Belgian government is demanding reparation."

"Yeah, I see where *that* can make it a little more expensive," admitted Rogers.

## - XII -

"I wasn't sure how you wanted to handle it," Boyes said, staring across the desk at Roosevelt, who had just returned to Stanleyville less than an hour ago.

"You were right to summon me, John."

"So far they haven't made any threats, but we're receiving diplomatic communiques every other day."

"What's the gist of them?"

"Reparation, as I mentioned in my note to you."

Roosevelt shook his head. "They know we don't have any money," he answered. "They want something else."

"Pickering's head on a platter, I should think," suggested Boyes.

"They don't care any more about their soldiers than *he* did," said Roosevelt. "Let me see those communiques."

Boyes handed over a sheaf of papers, and Roosevelt spent the next few minutes reading through them.

"Well?" asked Boyes when the American had set the papers down.

"I don't have sufficient information," answered Roosevelt. "Have they gone to the world press with this?"

"If they have, we won't know it for months," said Boyes. "The most recent paper I've seen is a ten-week-old copy of the *East African Standard.*" He paused. "Why would going to the press make a difference?"

"Because if they've gone public, then they're positioning themselves to try to take the Congo back from us, by proving that we can't protect European nationals."

"But they weren't nationals," said Boyes. "They were soldiers."

"That just makes our position worse," replied Roosevelt. "If we can't protect a group of armed men who know the Congo, how can we protect anyone else?"

"Then what do you want to do about Pickering?" inquired Boyes.

"Where is he now?"

"In the jail at Leopoldville. Charlie Ross brought him in dead drunk, and locked him away."

"The proper decision," said Roosevelt, nodding approvingly. "I must remember to commend him for it."

"I'm afraid you won't be able to, Mr. President," said Boyes. "He's back in Kenya."

"Charlie?" said Roosevelt, surprised. "I'd have thought he'd be just about the last one to leave."

Boyes paused and stared uncomfortably across the desk at Roosevelt.

"Except for Yank Rogers and me, he was."

"They're *all* gone?"

"Yes, sir." Boyes cleared his throat and continued: "You did your best, sir, but everything's coming unraveled. Most of them stuck it out for better than two years, but we always knew that sooner or later they'd leave. They're not bureaucrats and administrators, they're hunters and adventurers."

"I know, John," said Roosevelt, suddenly feeling his years. "And I don't hold it against them. They helped us more than we had any right to expect." He paused and sighed deeply. "I had rather hoped we'd have a bureaucracy in place by this time."

"I know, sir."

"I wonder if it would have done much good," Roosevelt mused aloud. He looked across at Boyes. "That trip I just returned from — I wasted my time, didn't I?"

"Yes, sir, you did."

"We needed more teachers," said Roosevelt. "One man can't educate them overnight. We needed more teachers, and more money, and more time."

Boyes shook his head. "You needed a different country, Mr. President."

"Let's have no more talk about the inferiority of the African race, John," said Roosevelt. "I'm not up to it today."

"I've never said they were inferior, Mr. President," said Boyes, surprised.

"Certainly you have, John — and frequently, too."

"That's not so, sir," insisted Boyes. "No matter what you may think, I have no contempt or hatred for the Africans — which is

why I've always been able to function in their countries." He paused. "I understand them — as much as any white man can. They're not inferior, but they *are* different. The things that are important to us are of no consequence to them, and the things they care about seem almost meaningless to us — and because of that, you simply can't turn them into Americans in two short years, or even twenty."

"We did it in America," said Roosevelt stubbornly.

"That's because your blacks were being assimilated into a dominant society that already existed and was in possession of the country," answered Boyes. "The whites here are just passing through, and the Africans know it, even if the whites don't. They may have to put up with us temporarily, but we won't have any lasting effect on their culture." He paused as Roosevelt considered his words, then continued: "When all is said and done, it's their country and their continent, and one of these days they're going to throw us all out. But what follows us won't look anything like a Western society; it'll be an African society, shaped by and for the Africans." He smiled wryly. "I wish them well, but personally I wouldn't care to be part of it."

"I've said it before, John: You're a very interesting man," said Roosevelt, a strange expression on his face. "Please continue."

"Continue?" repeated Boyes, puzzled.

"Tell me why you wouldn't care to be part of an African nation based on African principles and beliefs."

"For the same reason that they have no desire to become Americans or Europeans, once we stop bribing them to pretend otherwise," answered Boyes. "Their culture is alien to my beliefs." He paused. "Democracy, and the Christian virtues, and the joys of literature, and a reverence for life, all these things work for you, sir, because you have a deep and abiding belief in them. They won't work here because the people of the Congo *don't* believe in them.

They believe in witch doctors, and tribalism, and polygamy, and rituals that seem barbaric to me even after a quarter century of being exposed to them. We couldn't adapt to their beliefs any more than they can adapt to ours."

"Go on, John," said Roosevelt, his enthusiasm mounting.

Boyes stared at him curiously. "You've got that look about you, Mr. President."

"What look?"

"The same one I saw that first night we met in the Lado Enclave," said Boyes.

"How would you describe it?" asked Roosevelt, amused.

"I'd call it the look of a crusader."

Roosevelt chuckled with delight. "You're a very perceptive man, John," he said. "By God, I wish I were a drinking man! I'd celebrate with a drink right now!"

"I'll be happy to have two drinks, one for each of us, if you'll tell me what you're so excited about, Mr. President," said Boyes.

"I finally understand what I've been doing wrong," said Roosevelt.

"And what is that, sir?" asked Boyes cautiously.

*"Everything!"* said Roosevelt with a hearty laugh. "Lord knows I've had enough discussions on the subject with you and the others, but I've always proceeded on the assumption that I was part of the solution. Well, I'm not." He paused, delighted with his sudden insight. "I'm part of the problem! So are you, John. So are the British and the French and the Portuguese and the Belgians and everyone else who has tried to impose their culture on this continent. That's what you and Mickey Norton and Charlie Ross and all the others have been telling me, but none of you could properly articulate your position or carry it through to its logical conclusion." He paused again, barely able to sit still. "*Now* I finally see what we have to do, John!"

"Are you suggesting we leave?" asked Boyes.

Roosevelt shook his head. "It's not that simple, John. Eventually we'll have to, but if we leave now, the Belgians will just move back in and nothing will have changed. It's our duty — our holy mission, if you will — to make sure that doesn't happen, and that the Congo is allowed to develop free from all external influences, including ours."

"That's a mighty tall order, sir," said Boyes. "For instance, what will you do about the missionaries?"

"If they've made converts, they're here at the will of the people, and they've become part of the process," answered Roosevelt after some consideration. "If they haven't, eventually they'll give up and go home."

"All right," said Boyes. "Then what about—?"

"All in good time, John," interrupted Roosevelt. "We'll have to work out thousands of details, but I feel in my bones that after two years of false starts, we're finally on the proper course." He paused thoughtfully. "Our first problem is what to do with Billy Pickering."

"If you're worried about the Belgians, we can't give him a trial by jury," said Boyes. "These people have hated the Belgians for decades. They'll find him innocent of anything more serious than eliminating vermin, and probably vote him into the Presidency."

"No, we can't have a jury trial," agreed Roosevelt. "But not for the reason you suggest."

"Oh?"

"We can't have it because it's a Western institution, and that's what we're going to eradicate — unless and until it evolves naturally."

"Then do you want to execute him?" asked Boyes. "That might satisfy the Belgians."

Roosevelt shook his head vigorously. "We're not in the business of satisfying the Belgians, John." He paused thoughtfully. "Have Yank Rogers escort him to the nearest border and tell him never to

return to the Congo. If the Belgians want him, let *them* get him."

Having summarily eliminated the system of justice that he had imposed on the country, Roosevelt spent the remainder of the week eagerly dismantling the rest of the democracy that he had brought to the Congo.

## - XIII -

Roosevelt was sitting beneath the shade of an ancient baobab tree, composing his weekly letter to Edith. It had been almost three weeks since he had embraced his new vision for the future of the Congo, and he was discussing it enthusiastically, in between queries about Kermit, Quentin, Alice, and the other children.

Boyes sat some distance away, engrossed in Frederick Selous' latest memoirs, which had been personally inscribed to Roosevelt, whose safari he had arranged some three years earlier.

Suddenly Yank Rogers walked up the broad lawn of the state house and approached Roosevelt.

"What is it, Yank?"

"Company," he said with a contemptuous expression on his face.

"Oh?"

"Our old pal, Silva," said Rogers. "You want me to bring him to your office?"

Roosevelt shook his head. "It's too beautiful a day to go inside, Yank. I'll talk to him right here."

Rogers shrugged, walked around to the front of the building, and returned a moment later with Gerard Silva.

"Hello, Mr. Silva," said Roosevelt, getting to his feet and extending his hand.

"*Ambassador* Silva," replied Silva, shaking his hand briefly.

"I wasn't aware that Belgium had sent an Ambassador to the Congo Free State."

"My official title is Ambassador-at-Large," said Silva.

"Well, you seem to have come a long way since you were an Assistant Governor of an unprofitable colony," said Roosevelt easily.

"And *you* have come an equally long way since you promised to turn the Congo into a second America," answered Silva coldly. "All of it downhill."

"It's all a matter of perspective," said Roosevelt.

There was an uneasy silence.

"I have come to Stanleyville for two reasons, Mr. Roosevelt," said Silva at last.

"I was certain that you wouldn't come all this way without a reason," replied Roosevelt.

"First, I have come to inquire about the man, Pickering."

"Mr. Pickering was deported as an undesirable some 19 days ago," answered Roosevelt promptly.

"Deported?" demanded Silva. "He killed four Belgian soldiers!"

"That was hearsay evidence, Mr. Silva," responded Roosevelt. "We could find no eyewitnesses to confirm it."

"Pickering himself admitted it!"

"That was why he was deported," said Roosevelt. "Though there was insufficient evidence to convict him, we felt that there was every possibility that he was telling the truth. This made him an undesirable alien, and he was escorted to the border and told never to return."

"You let him go!"

"We deported him."

"This is totally unacceptable."

"We are a free and independent nation, Mr. Silva," said Roosevelt, a hint of anger in his high-pitched voice. "Are you presuming to tell us how to run our internal affairs?"

"I am telling you that this action is totally unacceptable to the government of Belgium," said Silva harshly.

"Then should Mr. Pickering ever confess to committing a murder within the borders of Belgium, I am sure that your government will deal with it in a manner that is more acceptable to you." Roosevelt paused, as Boyes tried not to laugh aloud. "You had a second reason for coming to Stanleyville, I believe?"

Silva nodded. "Yes, I have, Mr. Roosevelt. I bring an offer from my government."

"The same government that is furious with me for deporting Mr. Pickering?" said Roosevelt. "Well, by all means, let me hear it."

"Your experiment has been a dismal failure, Mr. Roosevelt," said Silva, taking an inordinate amount of pleasure in each word he uttered. "Your treasury is bankrupt, your railroads and highways will never be completed, your bridges and canals do not exist. You have failed to hold the national election that was promised to the international community. Even the small handful of men who accompanied you at the onset of this disastrous misadventure have deserted you." Silva paused and smiled. "You must admit that you are in an unenviable position, Mr. Roosevelt."

"Get to the point, Mr. Silva."

"The government of Belgium is willing to put our differences behind us."

"How considerate of them," remarked Roosevelt dryly.

"If you will publicly request our assistance," continued Silva, "we would be willing to once again assume the responsibility of governing the Congo." He smiled again. "You really have no choice, Mr. Roosevelt. With every day that passes, the Congo retreats further and further into insolvency and barbarism."

Roosevelt laughed harshly. "Your government has a truly remarkable sense of humor, Mr. Silva."

"Are you rejecting our offer?"

"Of course I am," said Roosevelt. "And you're lucky I don't pick

you up by the scruff of the neck and throw you clear back to Brussels."

"Need I point out that should my government decide that the Congo's vital interests require our presence, you have no standing army that can prevent our doing what must be done?"

Roosevelt glanced at his wristwatch. "Mr. Silva," he said, "I'm going to give you exactly sixty seconds to say good-bye and take your leave of us. If you're still here at that time, I'm going to have Mr. Boyes escort you to the nearest form of transportation available and point you toward Belgium."

"That is your final word?" demanded Silva, his face flushing beneath his deep tan.

"My final word is for King Albert," said Roosevelt heatedly. "But since I am a Christian and a gentleman, I can't utter it. Now get out of my sight."

Silva glared at him, then turned on his heel and left.

Roosevelt turned to Boyes, who was still sitting in his chair, book in hand. "You heard?" he asked.

"Every word of it." Boyes paused and smiled. "I wish he'd have stayed another forty seconds." He got to his feet and approached Roosevelt. "What do you plan to do about the Belgians?"

"We certainly can't allow them back into the country, that much is clear," said Roosevelt.

"How do you propose to stop them?"

Roosevelt lowered his head in thought for a moment, then looked up. "There's only one way, John."

"Raise an army?"

Roosevelt smiled and shook his head. "What would we pay them with?" He paused. "Besides, we don't want a war. We just want to make sure that the Congo is allowed to develop in its own way, free from all outside influences."

"What do you plan to do?" asked Boyes.

"I'm going to return to America and run for the Presidency again," announced Roosevelt. "Bill Taft is a fat fool, and I made a mistake by turning the country over to him. I'll run on a platform of making the Congo a United States Protectorate. *That* ought to make the Belgians think twice before trying to march in here again!" He nodded his head vigorously. "That's what I'll have to do, if these people are ever to develop their own culture in their own way." His eyes reflected his eagerness. "In fact, I'll leave this afternoon! I'll take Yank with me; I'm sure I can find a place for him in Washington."

"You realize what will happen if you lose?" said Boyes. "The Belgians will march in here five minutes later."

"Then there's no time to waste, is there?" said Roosevelt. "You're welcome to come along, John."

Boyes shook his head. "Thank you for the offer, Mr. President, but there's still a few shillings to be made here in Africa." He paused. "I'll stay in Stanleyville until you return, or until I hear that you've lost the election."

"A little more optimism, John," said Roosevelt with a grin. "The word 'lose' is not in our lexicon."

Boyes stared at him for a long moment. "You mean it, don't you?" he said at last, as the fact of it finally hit home. "You're really going to run for the Presidency again."

"Of course I mean it."

"Don't you ever get tired of challenges?" asked Boyes.

"Do you ever get tired of breathing?" replied Roosevelt, his face aglow as he considered the future and began enumerating the obstacles he faced. "First the election, then Protectorate status for the Congo, and then we'll see just what direction its social evolution takes." He paused. "This is a wonderful experiment we're embarking upon, John."

"It'll be interesting," commented Boyes.

"More than that," said Roosevelt enthusiastically. "It'll be bully — just bully!"

* * *

The date was April 17, 1912.

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*After returning home from the Congo, Theodore Roosevelt was denied the Republican nomination for President in 1912. Undaunted, he formed the Bull Moose party, ran as its presidential candidate, and was believed to be ahead in the polls when he was shot in the chest by a fanatic named John Chrank on October 14. Although he recovered from the wound, he was physically unable to campaign further and lost the election to Woodrow Wilson, though finishing well ahead of the seated Republican President, William Howard Taft. He lost what remained of his health in 1914 while exploring and mapping the River of Doubt (later renamed the Rio Teodoro) at the behest of the Brazilian government, and never returned to Africa. He died at his home in Sagamore Hill, New York, on January 6, 1919.*

*John Boyes made and lost three more fortunes in British East Africa, spent his final days driving a horse-drawn milk wagon in Nairobi, and died in 1951.*

*The Belgian Congo (later renamed Zaire) was granted its independence in 1960, and held the first and only free election in its history. This was followed by three years of the most savage inter-tribal bloodletting in the history of the continent.*

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